YES! AN ENTHUSIASTIC ANALYSIS OF THE CREATION OF A CONSENT CULTURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis seeks to ascertain what the culture surrounding consent looks like at the University of Texas at Austin. To get an understanding, I designed a quantitative and qualitative study that measured the degree to which consent culture exists on campus through the lenses of campus climate, the level of students' consent awareness, and their behaviors regarding consent. The metric, the "Campus Consent Culture Scale," measured students' beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and actions with regards to consent and sexual assault, using Likert agreement and frequency scales. Background knowledge and empirical evidence was collected through interviews with relevant subjects. Furthermore, this thesis analyzes the work that has already been done by campus programming, initiatives, and student organizations that are working to end interpersonal violence towards and create a culture that values consent. This thesis found evidence of a consent culture's infancy and offers recommendations for strategies that will continue to foster its growth and improve the campus climate at the University of Texas at Austin.

Dedication

For the survivors, the victims, and the advocates,
whose voices have made all the difference.

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I owe an immense amount of gratitude to the countless people who have given their time, energy, and support to this thesis, either directly or indirectly. First, to Margaret Bassett, my amazing supervisor, who supported this project over countless coffees and whose sparkling conversation made this feel doable from our very first meeting. To Sharon Hoefer, my inimitable second reader, who went above and beyond the call of duty—your counsel, patience, and above all, your sense of humor made this process possible and enjoyable. I can't thank you enough.

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PREFACE

Before I get into the nuts and bolts of this thesis, I feel an obligation to contextualize the position from which I am approaching this topic. The majority of my time as an undergraduate student at The University of Texas at Austin was spent in the realm of interpersonal violence prevention and survivor advocacy, working towards the creation of a consent culture on campus. I worked in a variety of different roles, with countless powerhouses of people, many of whom I was thrilled to reconnect with throughout this process.

In the spirit of transparency and full-disclosure, the roles I held included founding the Interpersonal Violence Peer Support (IVPS) program, volunteering as a Peer Supporter in the inaugural class, serving as president of the Voices Against Violence (VAV) student organization, as a founding member of the Interpersonal Violence Prevention Coalition, as the first Interpersonal Violence Prevention Policy Director in Student Government, and was employed as a student coordinator for the IVPS and VAV programs.

As an academic, as an activist, and as a survivor, this topic is near and dear to my heart. In many ways, this thesis is my love letter to The University of Texas and all of the people—students and staff alike—who have worked and are currently working to make it a safer place.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Campus sexual assault describes the scourge of sexual violence that occurs on college campuses and the phrase itself has gained traction in the last few years as a result of increased public awareness, student advocacy, legislative focus, and cultural shifts surrounding the issue. But this issue did not emerge overnight. Rape is not a new crime—from the age of Hammurabi to the *Me-Too* era, sexual violence has been perceived in various ways throughout human history (Thornhill & Palmer, 2000; Harper, 1994; Tabori, 1971), but the current problem is that we have normalized one of the most heinous, violating, and egregious crimes a human being can perpetrate against another as a part of the "college experience" (Schaaf et al., 2019).

In order to understand the cultural landscape surrounding campus sexual violence, it is first necessary to have an understanding of the prevalence. While this study focuses on the culture at The University of Texas at Austin, it is important to note that this issue is not unique to any one school. Sexual assault is endemic at every institution of higher learning throughout the nation (Cantor, Fisher, Chibnall, Townsend, et al., 2015; Inal and Smith, 2018). In the national discourse, the figure "1 in 5" is often thrown around when discussing how many women are sexually assaulted while in college, but that number changes depending on the definition of assault and the size of the sample. One report found that college women between the ages of 18 and 24 are three times likelier to experience sexual assault than women in the general population. (Sinozich & Lanton, 2014). The same report found that 97 percent of these instances of sexual violence are perpetrated by males.

In the most comprehensive study ever conducted on campus sexual assault, the American Association for Universities (AAU) surveyed over 150,000 from 27 different institutions of

higher education (IHEs) and found that since starting college, 23.1 percent of female undergraduate students were victims of sexual assault by physical force, the threat of physical force, or incapacitation (Cantor et al., 2015). To make that crystal clear: nearly 1 in 4 women experience violent or incapacitated sexual assault during college. To deny that campus sexual assault is a problem is to deny the facts. Furthermore, the real number of assaults is undoubtedly much higher, as these findings did not take into consideration the number committed under coercion or in the absence of affirmative consent (Cantor et al., 2015) and because sexual violence is often unreported, it is difficult to get a true understanding of the prevalence in even the best of studies (Schaaf, 2019; Schwarz, Gibson, & Lewis-Arévalo, 2017). Four years later, the AAU conducted a follow-up survey and found that for the 21 schools that were surveyed in both 2015 and 2019, the rate of nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force or inability to consent increased from 23.4 percent to 26.4 percent (Cantor et al., 2019).

Sexual violence is undeniably a problem at universities throughout the United States, including The University of Texas at Austin. This thesis will seek to ascertain the root of campus sexual assault, understand the challenges prevention programming faces in its mitigation and prevention, and will closely examine the climate and culture surrounding sexual assault and consent at The University of Texas at Austin, a large, public research university in the American southwest, and will provide recommendations for how to build a “consent culture” at U.T. Austin.

II. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Key Terminology

For the purposes of this section, it is necessary to provide brief definitions for the terms which will be used throughout. The U.S. Department of Justice defines rape as "the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim" (Sullivan & Rogers, 2012). Sexual assault means "any nonconsensual act" including when the victim does not have the ability to consent (Sullivan & Rogers, 2012). Rape is always a sexual assault, but a sexual assault is not always rape. Sexual violence is a catch-all term that describes any instance of rape, sexual assault, or sexual abuse. What makes a sex act sexual violence is the absence of consent, which can be expressed as physical violence, coercion, incapacitation, lack of affirmative consent, or the inability to consent for other reasons (including age). When we refer to *consent* throughout this thesis, we will be referring specifically to *affirmative consent*, defined as a voluntarily-given, mutual, and clear agreement that requires consciousness, clarity, and can be revoked at any time (Graham, Treves-Kagan, Magee, DeLong, Ashley, Macy, 2017).

Rape Culture

Campus sexual assault is the byproduct of the pervasiveness of the rape culture that exists in our society. The idea of 'rape culture' was first introduced in the 1970s with the rise of second-wave feminism, but it was solidified in academic discourse by Martha Burt in 1980, who defined rape culture as "a pervasive ideology that effectively supports or excuses sexual assault"

(Burt, 1980). Rape culture is a theoretical concept derived from sexism, composed of rape-supportive attitudes, and enforced by traditional gender roles, hostility towards women, and acceptance of violence (Burt, 1980; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, 1995; Johnson & Johnson, 2017). To put it another way, the values and beliefs that make an environment conducive to rape are the essence of rape culture (Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 2005; Boswell & Spade, 1996). In a rape culture, sexual violence is not only normalized, but encouraged and supported by society, and enforced through media and popular culture. In a rape culture, survivors of rape and sexual assault are blamed for the crimes committed against them and their trauma is belittled and denied. In a rape culture, rape is both highly prevelant and excused.

Rape culture exists within the larger culture of sexism, so it is therefore not possible to discuss rape culture without discussing the differences in gender norms and roles that exist between men and women with regards to sex. Men who are sexually active are rewarded with praise and positive reinforcement, while sexually active women are "sluts" and are met with degradation (Friedman & Valenti, 2008). Assumptions about men maintain that they are the initiators of sex and are dominant or aggressive, while conversely, women are viewed as passive and acquiescent and are the gatekeepers of sex (Buchwald et al., 2005; LaPlante, McCormick, & Brannigan, 1980). The phenomenon of collegiate rape culture is therefore an extension of the larger behaviors at play within American society—campuses are microcosms of society's rape culture, with its features heightened due to the presence of unique subcultures that exist at IHEs.

On college campuses, rape culture manifests as an environment that fosters attitudes that accept and tolerate date rape and sexual assault as a part of campus life (Burnett et al., 2009). Lois Pineau explains date rape as:

> "nonaggravated sexual assault, nonconsensual sex that does not involve physical injury… but because it does not involve physical injury, and because physical injury is often the only criterion that is accepted as evidence that the *actus reas* is nonconsensual, what is really sexual assault is often mistaken for seduction" (Pineau, 1989).

The majority of sexual assaults are committed by somebody the victim knows, which is not to say that those assaults do not involve physical violence, because they certainly can, but it is more likely than not that they will fall under Pineau's definition. At the University of Texas, 84 percent of sexual assaults were perpetrated either by someone with whom the victim had a close relationship with or by an acquaintance—in other words, date rapes (Busch-Armendariz et al., 2017).

Burnett asserts that rape culture on college campuses is a "communication phenomenon," in which campus rape culture is defined by "communication about sex and rape, the possibility of rape, the negotiation of consent, the rape itself, the aftermath of rape, and the reaction to date rape" (Burnett et al., 2009). This thesis will similarly argue the importance of communication as it relates to rape culture. Sex without consent is rape, consent is communication, therefore, effective rape prevention entails communication.

Other factors that create and perpetuate rape culture on campus include rape myths, which are beliefs that lead to a positive treatment of perpetrators and a vilification of victims (Frese, Moya, & Megias, 2004). Examples of myths include ideas such as "no means yes" or that the length of a skirt has anything to do with getting raped. Social norms within groups promote these myths by making these beliefs seem like normal patterns of thought, further ingraining this ideology into the collective consciousness of the group (Burnett, 2009).

While rape myths are ubiquitous in society outside of the university setting, research suggests that subcultures on college campuses, most notably fraternities and athletic teams, maintain stronger rape-supportive attitudes and rape myth acceptance than the general populace (Bleecker & Murnen, 2005; Sanday, 2007). To explain why might be the case, Peggy Reeves Sanday, in her book *Fraternity Gang Rape,* asserts that its the isolation of these groups that likely enhances senses of "privilege and entitlement" that ultimately manifest as sexual violence (Sanday, 2007). These groups will be explored more deeply in the next chapter.

Another factor that makes colleges a hotbed for sexual violence is rampant alcohol use. Multiple studies have found that alcohol is involved in the majority of instances of campus sexual assault (Banyard et al., 2005; Benson, Gohm, & Gross, 2007). These findings are supported by a study conducted at The University of Texas at Austin, which found that perpetrators used alcohol to facilitate 69 percent of instances of unwanted sexual contact and 84 percent of unwanted sexual contact (Busch-Armendariz et al., 2017). Alcohol is so intertwined with sexual violence because the overconsumption of alcohol leads to the removal of a person's ability to consent to sex and because alcohol is often a tool used to aid in the facilitation of sexual assault (O'Donahue & Schewe, 2019; Kingree & Thompson, 2015; Abbey et al., 2001).

Rape culture is not just the factors that cause sexual violence or the assault itself, it is also embedded in the aftermath of the experience—in terms of the personal, community, and societal response to it. The aftermath entails the reactions of those involved in the assault (e.g. the victim minimizing the experience or blaming themselves, or a perpetrator bragging about a sexual conquest rather than feeling guilt), as well as the response of the community.

In order for a survivor to share their story after experiencing rape, they must place an enormous amount of trust in their social systems as they risk possible disbelief, vilification, blame, and derision (Schwarz & Gibson, 2017; Orenstein, 2007; Campbell, 1998; Madigan & Gamble, 1991). If survivors are treated insensitively and receive unsupportive responses from people in their community—whether it's a friend's lack of support or a police officer victim-blaming—already present feelings of powerlessness, guilt, and shame are likely to be intensified, and survivors will be retraumatized in what has become known as "secondary victimization" (Patterson, 2011; Feldman-Summers & Palmer, 1980; Madigan & Gamble, 1991; Campbell, 1998). Secondary victimization is a betrayal of the survivor's trust in the people and systems that are supposed to help rather than harm.

The silencing of survivors is a hallmark of rape culture. In a rape culture, survivors are tacitly encouraged not to talk about their experiences either through their own acceptance of rape myths or their perceptions of their community's level of rape myth acceptance (Burnett, 2009; Harned, 2005). Many may feel that it is a safer option emotionally or even physically to stay silent rather than suffer the retraumatization of community betrayal, even if the isolation is painful (Kirkner, Lorenz, Ullman, & Kirkner, 2017).

This silencing effect often manifests as low reporting rates, and according to the Department of Justice's National Crime Victimization Survey that was conducted between 2010 and 2016, only 23 percent of rapes are reported to law enforcement (Morgan & Truman, 2018). Low reporting rates are an emblem of a rape culture in addition to the many systems and barriers that exist that make reporting difficult for those who experience interpersonal violence, but not reporting creates a vicious cycle in which perpetrators are able to avoid suffering consequences

for their actions and a "sense of tolerance toward rape" is created (Burnett, 2009). It must be emphasized that there are any number of reasons why a survivor may not want to report their experience—whether it is the fear of victim-blaming and ostracization or a lack of trust in the criminal justice system, all reasons are equally valid.

However, if survivors are met with the support and resources they need, and are treated empathically and with care and respect, then their community—from friends and family to service providers and the criminal justice system—can function as an important catalyst for their healing (Kirkner et al., 2017; Ullman and Filipas, 2001; Campbell et al., 2001). A supportive-response is critical in mitigating the effects of trauma and it is an essential piece of interrupting rape culture and working to build something better.

Consent Culture

Consent culture is best described as the polar opposite of rape culture. It is a relatively new concept and has not been researched or discussed as much as rape culture in academic literature. Consent culture is complex and encompasses many issues and ideas, but ultimately boils down to a theoretical construct that describes the values and beliefs that make an environment *not* conducive to sexual violence. In a consent culture, instances of rape are rare and sexual violence is considered unacceptable; consent violations are neither excused nor condoned. In a consent culture, asking for consent is not just normalized, but encouraged. In a consent culture, survivors who disclose experiences of interpersonal violence are supported, believed, and empowered, rather than blamed, belittled, and vilified. Consent culture entails healthy communication, healthy attitudes toward sex and sexuality, and respect for every person's bodily

autonomy, regardless of gender (or any other factor). Consent culture recognizes the harm caused by rape culture and therefore entails trauma-informed care, survivor-centered spaces, and the widespread recognition of survivors. Creating such a culture is essentially the end goal for the violence prevention field.

In this idealized and theoretical culture, consent would be taught from birth and positively reinforced throughout childhood, so that by the time an individual starts having sex, consent is second nature and does not even need to be taught.

Defining Consent

Defining consent should be easy, as it is a black-and-white concept: you either have someone's consent or you do not, but somehow the concept of consent has been made more complex. There is not a uniform definition of consent found in legal framework or in laws or in academic literature and in fact, the topic itself can be a hot-button issue for everyone from social workers and lawyers to philosophers and politicians, who disagree on the subject. Oxford's English Dictionary defines consent as "voluntary agreement to or acquiescence in what another proposes or desires; compliance, concurrence, permission" ("Consent," 2020). The dictionary definition for consent is obviously not an ideal model, as "acquiescence" implies reluctance or a lack of protest, which is certainly not the exemplar for what consent should be.

The concept of *affirmative consent* has gained traction in recent years, as states such as California and New York have codified affirmative consent into their laws and many universities across the country have adopted it as the standard (Blad, 2015; Delamater, 2015). Exact verbiage of definitions vary, but the gist of all these definitions is that consent must be affirmative,

voluntary, mutual, conscious, ongoing, and clear. Consent is often defined by what it is not: given under force or threat of force, coerced, when one or more parties is incapacitated, or when one cannot legally give consent (such as in the case of minors). However, even within circles that hold affirmative consent as the gold standard, there are divergent schools of thought. Some maintain that consent can only be given if both parties are sober, while others do not define incapacitation as intoxication; some believe that consent must be verbal, while others think that body language, so long as it is unambiguous, constitutes consent (Stryker, 2017).

Consent can become complicated and even more muddied when it comes to sexual relations between people with power differentials. While the law recognizes certain power dynamics as nonconsensual (e.g. sex between an adult and a minor, or more aptly, statutory rape), there is not much legal guidance for other situations where one individual has power over another and true consent is not possible. Other examples of power dynamics include boss-employee, professor-student, therapist-client, or President of the United States-White House intern—for some of these situations, recourse could take the form of sexual harassment lawsuits or loss of licensure, but there is not a basis in criminal law.

But to put it simply, affirmative consent is the idea that "only yes means yes" with regards to sexual activity—which is a major shift from the "no means no" language that dominated the anti-violence movement of the twentieth century (Dougherty, 2015) Affirmative consent is proactive rather than reactionary, as the onice of ensuring that there is consent falls on the initiator, rather than on the recipient's rejection or acceptance of advances made (Jozkowski, 2015).

Sex-Positivity

An understanding of affirmative consent does not come naturally because we have not been conditioned or socialized to understand it. But what makes it so difficult? Students often cite "awkwardness" of negotiating boundaries and talking about sex or the influence of alcohol that "blurs the lines" of what could be consensual (Forsyth & Rogstad, 2015; Kingree & Thompson, 2015). Further, studies show that many people believe that 'liquid courage' is necessary to have sexual interactions (George, 2019). This is a symptom of a culture that has a negative relationship towards sex. Society has not conditioned us to have healthy conversations about sex, so the concept of even discussing it with a potential partner can feel "awkward" (Cruz, Greenwald & Sandil, 2017). The most effective violence prevention programming (discussed at-length in a later section) tackles the kinds of beliefs that students have in non-judgmental, conversational ways (DeGue, et al., 2014). The sex-positivity movement frames sex in a healthy way that removes puritannical shame, encourages pleasure of both partners, and is the essence of the enthusiasm of the "enthusiastic yes" (Farook & Abreu, 2017).

Consent Culture in Praxis

A culture of consent may sound like an unattainable pie-in-the-sky idea, but this kind of culture already exists in certain communities on the fringes of society. To find a concrete model of consent culture, one need no look further than Burning Man. While that might sound like an odd statement to make in academic literature, considering most have preconceived notions that the event is nothing more than a big desert rave, "the Burn" is far more than that. For one week, 80,000 participants (known as "burners") from all over the world converge in Nevada's Black

Rock Desert to build the temporary metropolis of Black Rock City—complete with everything from an airport and post office to a census and daily newspaper—to rebuild society and all of its norms and ideologies from scratch (Wasserman, 2018; Bowditch, 2013, Pike, 2012).

But Burning Man stretches far beyond Black Rock City, as it is a cultural movement that has spread to six continents with 116 known regional events globally (Tighe, 2019) and is rooted in shared values, rather "10 principles," that reject society's norms and allow for cultural and social experimentation (Brooks, 2020; Green & Kaiser, 2011). These principles include: "Radical Self-Expression, Radical Self-Reliance, Radical Inclusion, Immediacy, Decommodification, Communal Effort, Participation, Gifting, Leaving No Trace, and Civic Responsibility" (Brooks 2020; "The Ten Principles of Burning Man," 2020).

Among the many dominant ideologies that "the Burn" attempts to dismantle is the pervasive rape culture that exists in mainstream society. Countless regional burn events across the world have adopted consent as their "eleventh principle ("Vision and History of the 11th Principle: Consent!," 2020) and the Nevada event itself places a huge emphasis on consent, which is prominently featured in its "Survival Guide," the mandatory reading for all citizens of Black Rock City ("Survival Guide," 2019). Before anyone even steps foot "on-playa," it is made clear to all that consent is valued within the community and that consent violations are not tolerated. Consent is placed at the forefront of these events and is the backbone of how the community operates in the interactions people have with one another (Brooks, 2020).

The Bureau of Erotic Discourse (BED) was formed by a group of self-proclaimed sex-positive burners fifteen years ago and through this group, information about consent, healthy

sex, negotiating boundaries, navigating consent when intoxicants are involved, reporting options, safety planning, accountability processes, and how to support survivors is disseminated throughout the week of the event through workshops, trainings, and informational pamphlets, among other things (BED, 2020). The B.E.D.'s *Clarity and Consent* sheet from 2014 offers several exercises to enhance verbal communication between partners, explicates the differences between desires and sexual boundaries, and assists readers with learning how to set limits and expressing those boundaries in ways that do not feel awkward (BED, 2014). In discussing enthusiastic consent, the Bureau wrote:

> We believe in mutual enthusiasm! The best way to get to that enthusiasm is for the involved parties to talk about what they all really desire, and what they want to avoid. That requires open and honest communication and negotiation (BED, 2014).

While the burner community is one of the only examples in which a tangible, culture of consent can be found in praxis, it must be noted, however, that Burning Man is not perfect. Every event participant still exists within larger context of a society where rape culture is normalizedi nor is the event immune from bad actors or instances of assault, but what makes this community unique is the collective intolerance of boundary violations, whether sexual or not (Brooks, 2020; Murphy & Van Brunt, 2017). But if institutions of higher learning seek to find a model of consent culture that is actionable and tangible, they should emulate Burning Man and place consent at the center of the discussion.

Federal Law Regarding Campus Sexual Assault

Campus sexual assault became a major issue for the Obama administration towards the end of his second term. In 2014, President Obama launched the White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault with the intention of using executive power to address the rape culture and the high prevalance rates of sexual assault that existed at American colleges and universities (Canan, Jozkowski, & Crawford, 2018).

In order to understand the issue of campus sexual assault on the national level, it is imperative to understand the history of how it has been addressed in recent years. The United States government has provided some regulation for how colleges and universities are supposed to handle instances of sexual misconduct, notable strides include the expansion of Title IX (through the lens of the 2011 "Dear Colleague" Letter), the Clery Act, and the Campus SaVE Act.

Passed in 1972, Title IX of the Education Amendments states "no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" (1972). In layman's terms, Title IX is a civil rights law that prohibits sex discrimination in educational settings. Institutions that do not comply with the law risk losing federal funding.

Since the 1970s, sexual harassment has been recognized as a form of gender bias covered under Title IX (1972), most notably through women's athletics programs. But it wasn't until April 2011 when the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights issued the landmark "Dear Colleague" letter that clarified sexual violence as a form of sexual harassment and gender

discrimination that universities had an obligation to respond to (Ali, 2011). This letter reframed the national conversation surrounding campus sexual violence. The letter stated, "The sexual harassment of students, including sexual violence, interferes with students' right to receive an education free from discrimination and, in the case of sexual violence, is a crime" (Ali, 2011). This letter was the first time sexual violence was explicated as a Title IX issue, naming the ways in which sexual violence relates to Title IX, and it clarified the obligation that universities have to take action in effectively responding to complaints of sexual assault on campus. "Dear Colleague" also explicated the obligation universities have to respond effectively to complaints of sexual assault on their campuses as well as take measures to increase prevention and education efforts or risk losing federal funds (Ali, 2011).

The letter defined sexual violence as "sexual acts perpetrated against a person's will or where a person is incapable of giving consent due to incapacitation or disability." (Russlyn, 2011). The "Dear Colleague" letter was unquestionably a turning point in terms of how universities handle the scourge of sexual violence. However, the definition excludes instances of sexual assault that occur as a result of coercion or affirmative consent—both major components of the widely accepted definition of sexual assault, including the definition that the University of Texas at Austin uses (HOP 3-3031).

[Note: Just a week before the completion of this thesis, new Title IX regulations were issued by Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos that colleges no longer have to respond to assaults that occur off-campus in non-university-affiliated buildings, can raise their evidentiary standards from "preponderance of evidence" to "clear and convincing," allow for

cross-examination, and no longer have to adhere to specific time frames for investigation (Anderson, 2020).]

After the 1986 rape and murder of Lehigh University student Jeanne Clery, the federal government passed a law (known as the Clery Act) in 1990 that requires any college and university receiving federal funding to report information about crime on and around their campuses. Under this law, colleges must disclose crime statistics, publish an Annual Campus Security Report, and issue timely alerts to campus about any imminent danger that poses a threat to students and employees (Clery Act, 1990). Like Title IX, the act is enforced by the US Department of Education. The Campus Sexual Violence Elimination (SaVE) Act of 2013 built upon the provisions of the Clery Act and broadened disciplinary mandates, increased transparency, improved the reporting process for victims and survivors, and required prevention programs on campus (SaVE Act, 2013).

State Law

In the absence of national consent standards for academic institutions, some states have taken the lead and successfully implemented affirmative consent laws for their public colleges and universities. California has the most comprehensive model of combatting sexual violence on college campuses. Introduced by Senators León and Jackson and signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown, Senate Bill 967 mandated that all public institutions of higher learning in the state adopt a policy concerning interpersonal violence. The law outlines affirmative consent as "a freely and affirmatively communicated willingness to participate in a particular sexual activity or behavior, expressed either by words or clear, unambiguous actions" (2015). The law makes clear

that it is incumbent upon the person who wants to engage in the sexual activity to ensure that they have the consent of the other party involved. The California law explicates that consent is both continuous and can be revoked at any time; and it further explains that consent can never be assumed, regardless of a "past sexual or romantic history or current relationship."

In addition to this clear definition of consent, California also outlines what is not considered a valid defense for the accused in terms of the disciplinary process. Under this law, the accused cannot assume there was consent as a consequence of self-induced intoxication or recklessness and the accused has no defense if they did not take steps to make certain that they had the consent of the other party. The law also mandates wide-ranging prevention programming and consent education in addition to adopting survivor-centered policies with regards to investigations, making this law the most comprehensive of its kind; as the first state to pass such legislation, California has paved the way for the rest of the country in terms of combating sexual violence from a policy level.

But California is not alone. The State of New York is another prime example of a state legislature taking the lead on this issue. Governor Andrew Cuomo signed the "Enough is Enough" legislation (also known as Senate Bill S5966) which required all public colleges and universities to adopt a uniform definition of affirmative consent. The law defined this as a "knowing, voluntary and mutual decision among all participants to engage in sexual activity" (2015) and it further clarifies that "silence or lack of resistance" is not a form of consent nor is it a suitable defense for the accused. The law also included an amnesty policy that ensures students who report sexual assault incidents are given amnesty for drug and alcohol use. In addition, it created a survivor-centered and trauma-informed "sexual assault victims unit" within the state

police and outlined a "Student's Bill of Rights" that included the right to report, to be free from retaliation, and to be given access to resources.

What is most profound about these strides made in state legislatures is that they provide hard evidence that suggests that a culture shift surrounding sexual assault and consent is in fact taking place in our country, just because these issues have trickled into legislation. Laws reflect the culture which creates them and they change with the tides of collective attitudes, so these bills are nothing short of significant. A change in the culture means nothing without a change in the law; in fact, a culture change is utterly meaningless if there is not an institutionalized, legal precedent to bolster it. Like a pendulum, cultural attitudes can swing back and forth, but laws can provide the solid ground that allow such cultural shifts to take root and flourish.

Rape Culture Theories

In the introductory section of this thesis, the concept of rape culture was defined as the normalization and support of sexual violence by society, where rape is both prevalent and excused, where victims are blamed for crimes committed against them, and where rape is viewed as an inevitability. This section further explores rape culture and seeks to assess the pervasiveness of rape culture on college campuses.

Rape Myth Acceptance

The foundation of rape culture is rooted in the idea of rape myth acceptance, coined by Martha Burt in 1980 in the first major empirical study on the subject, defined the term as the "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists—in creating a

climate hostile to rape victims" (Burt 1980). Rape myths are so pervasive in our society that you likely know them all already. *She was asking for it. What was she wearing? Well, that's what happens when you get too drunk. Men can't get raped. Why didn't you fight him off? Did you scream? They are probably just crying rape for attention. Was it a stranger who jumped out of the bushes? Men can't control their sexual urges. It is not possible to rape your spouse.* The list goes on. The vast majority of rape myths imply that rape is the fault of the victim, not the rapist, and they reinforce sexist stereotypes about how gender is supposed to function.

In Burt's study, she analyzes the complex array of attittudes and beliefs that impact the level of rape myth acceptance in society. She identified three main components: sexual conservativism (gender role stereotyping), adversarial sexual beliefs (the expectation that sex is "fundamentally exploitative"), and the acceptance of interpersonal violence (the idea that physical "force and coercion are legitimate ways to gain compliance" in sexual encounters) (Burt, 1980). The data from the interviews she conducted suggest that "rape-supportive beliefs were systematically related" to the aformentioned "pervasive cultural attitudes," finding that the higher one holds the these beliefs, the greater the likelihood that a person will accept myths about rape (Burt, 1980). Furthermore, she found that "acceptance of interpersonal violence was the strongest attitude predictor to rape myth acceptance" (Burt, 1980). The acceptance of interpersonal violence is the bedrock of rape culture and the only way rape culture will ever end is if interpersonal violence becomes socially unacceptable. Burt also asserts that a positive association between sex and violence has been created in our society and that it is perpetuated and reinforced by the media and popular culture (Burt, 1980). This study also found that men were more likely to accept female rape myths than were women (Burt, 1980).

Kimberly Lonsway and Louise Fitzgerald reconceptualize Burt's original model of rape culture to emphasize the paramount role that sexism and hostility towards women play in the acceptance of rape myths and the perpetuation of sexual violence (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). The researchers view Burt's Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale as being blind to misogyny because it does not distinguish between the sexes by saying, "each party… is manipulative, sly, cheating, opaque to the other's understanding, and not to be trusted" (Burt, 1980). However, when taking a closer examination about which gender holds which adversarial sexual belief, Lonsway and Fitzgerald found that men believe women to be "sly and manipulative" whereas women believe men only want sex from women (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). It is clear which characterization is more damaging.

Further investigated was the "acceptance of interpersonal violence" component and overwhelming evidence was found of a belief held by men that "violence against women, particularly sexual violence, is acceptable in interpersonal relationships" (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). The researchers concluded that there is a fourth component of rape culture and a shared explanation for these two characterizations: hostility towards women, finding that "negative societal views of women along with desensitization and acceptance of violence may excuse the perpetration of rape and sexual assault" (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995).

Nicole Johnson and Dawn Johnson utilized the model put forth by Burt, Lonsway & Fitzgerald and explored their conceptions through the prism of college students because of the "high prevalence of sexual assault and rape and low rate of reporting" on college campuses (Johnson & Johnson, 2017). The researchers analyzed how individuals perceived the beliefs of their peers and found that "hostile sexism, adversarial sexual beliefs, and hostility toward women

explained the majority of variance within rape culture" and suggested that sexual violence prevention education should target "cultural perceptions of women as inherently ill-willed, power-hungry, and subordinate to men" (Johnson & Johnson, 2017).

It is neccessary to acknowledge that the literature exploring the conceptions of rape culture is unfortunately both limited and dated. The model originally published by Burt is now forty years old and the only real successive works (Lonsway and Fitzgerald, 1994, 1995) were published in the mid-1990s. The field, as far as the literature is concerned, has not updated the model of rape culture or the variables that come into play since the 1980s and 1990s, despite the major cultural shifts that have occurred in the new millenium. (This is not to say that no new research has been conducted, because it has, but the lack of an updated model is worth mentioning.) Johnson and Johnson posit that more research needs to be conducted on examining modern issues from substance use and sex-positivity to the impact of media and legal systems in our understanding of how these variables influence rape culture on college campuses.

The Role of Benevolent and Hostile Sexism in Rape Myths

Expanding upon Burt's (1980) idea that sexist stereotypes play a key role in rape myth acceptance, Glick and Fiske (1996) conceptualized sexism as an ambivalent force, split into two opposing attitudes towards women: benevolent and hostile. Hostile sexism (HS) is what comes to mind when thinking about sexism, manifesting as prejudice, antipathy, negative beliefs and stereotypes, and harassment (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Benevolent sexism (BS)—less obvious and trickier to spot, yet equally damaging—is the ostensibly positive perception of women that slyly perpetuates patriarchy and reinforces rigid gender roles and harmful stereotypes (Glick & Fiske,

1996). Benevolent and hostile sexism are two sides of the same sexist coin, as they both perpetuate the idea that women are the "weaker sex," which serves as the justification for male dominance (Glick & Fiske, 1996). In other words, benevolent sexism puts women on a pedestal while hostile sexism tears them down.

Glick and Fiske assert that ambivalent sexism is the natural consequence of three distinct realities present in society: paternalism, gender differentiations, and heterosexuality (1996). In its hostile form, *dominative paternalism* promotes male domination through the portrayal of women as incompetent, unfit, and weak, which in turn brings about the benevolently sexist idea of *protective paternalism*, which maintains that women, as a result of their innate weakness and inability, require men to protect and provide for them (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The belief that women need male protection masquerades as a sweet sentiment, but it is a coded way to reinforce female inferiority.

In tandem with paternalism, differences in the perceptions of gender bolster the male-dominated social hierarchy, as *competitive gender differentiations* depict men with desirable traits that enable them to hold positions of power while women are characterized as naturally suited for subservience and domesticity; *complementary gender differentiations* depict women with qualities that men stereotypically lack (such as caring and emotionality) "that happen to align with restrictive and subordinate roles (e.g. homemaker)" (Lee, Fiske, Glick, & Chen, 2010).

The third and final component of ambivalent sexism is heterosexuality, which is arguably the root of male benevolence towards women and the explanation for why sexism is not entirely hostile. Heterosexual men are dependent on women for intimacy and sexual reproduction, in part

due to harmful masculinity and homophobia, which causes a dynamic where those in the socially dominant group are to a degree at the mercy of those they are subjugating (Lee et al., 2010). Men romanticize and revere women but only in the context that they exist as wives, child-bearers, and the objects of their desire; women who adhere to traditional norms are idealized by benevolent sexists while those who challenge patriarchy and gender norms are met with hostility by men who seek to maintain the status quo (Viki & Abrams, 2002).

What makes ambivalent sexism noteworthy is the ambivalence itself. Our society is somehow able to hold conflicting feelings of both extreme antipathy and utter reverence towards women simultaneously. Ambivalent sexists avoid the cognitive dissonance by grouping women into categories of "good" and "bad" their eyes, the "good" women are worthy of benevolence and the "bad" women are deserving of hostility (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Sexist ideas about "good" and "bad" women are the fuel to the fire of rape myth acceptance, which often manifests in devastating ways, like victim-blaming.

Victim-blaming occurs when survivors of sexual assault are blamed for their assault, rather than the perpetrator. In a rape culture, the responsibility falls on the victim to not get raped, rather than the rapist not to rape. Instances of victim-blaming include questions like "*What were you wearing?" "You probably shouldn't have had that much to drink." "If you didn't want to have sex with him, why did you go to his apartment?"* The rape myths that appear in these examples include the ideas that wearing certain articles of clothing increases the likelihood of getting assaulted, that the consumption of alcohol is "asking for it," and that entering someone's home implies irrevocable consent to sex. These rape myths are dripping with ambivalent sexist ideology and form one of the most widely accepted rape myths: only "bad" women are sexually

assaulted, only those who wear skirts and go out drinking. Studies have shown that women perceived to have 'bad reputations' are more likely to be blamed for acquaintance rape (Viki & Abrams, 2002). Viki and Abrams found that individuals who were high in benevolent sexism held rigid beliefs about how 'good' women should behave and therefore viewed women who violated these norms as deserving of anything that happens to them (2002).

Gender Differences in Rape Myths

While the bulk of academic literature on sexual violence focuses predominantly on female victims, it is essential to note that non-women (men and nonbinary/gendernonconforming people) also experience victimization. For example, nonbinary individuals (those whose gender identity falls outside the gender binary) experience elevated rates of victimization (Cobian & Stolzenberg, 2018) and male victims were involved in 9 percent of all rapes and sexual assaults that occurred between 1995 and 2010 (Department of Justice, 2013). The statistic about men, however, is likely misleading, as these are just reported cases and evidence shows that men are 1.5 times less likely to report their assaults and men may face additional and unique barriers to reporting (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2008). This is not to discount the fact that males are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of rape, as 98.1 percent of female rape victims and 93.3 percent of male rape victims reported only male perpetrators (Black et al., 2011). However, for forms of sexual violence other than rape (such as being made to penetrate, sexual coercion, and unwanted sexual contact), a majority of male victims reported female perpetrators (Black et al., 2011).

Research shows that female offenders are not only rare but tend to utilize dissimilar tactics and exhibit separate dynamics from their male-perpetrator correlatives (Wijkman,

Bijleveld, & Hendriks, 2010). This is mentioned to acknowledge that non-men sometimes perpetrate sexual violence, however, claiming that because some women commit sexual violence it means that rape is not a form of gender-based violence would be a grotesque misreading of the facts at-hand and would ignore the root causes of sexual violence. Furthermore, in cases where sexual violence is committed against men, often gender, especially male rape myths (which will be discussed in greater detail later in this section) still play an essential role (Sable, Danis, Mauzy, & Gallagher, 2006).

Women are still more likely to be victimized than men, but the proportion of female victims to male victims is likely distorted as a result of gender difference in the rate of reporting (Chapleau et al., 2008). This low reporting rate is likely a direct result of male rape myths. While there are many similarities between men and women in terms of their emotional responses to trauma, there are stark differences between male and female rape myths and how victims are perceived. Societal myths surrounding male rape include the beliefs that it is not possible to force a man to have sex against his will, that men who experience sexual assault perpetrated by another man must be homosexual, and that women are more affected by sexual violence than men (Chapleau, et al., 2008; Stermac, Del Bove, & Addison, 2004).

Further, men are expected to be able to defend themselves against sexual assault, thus a sexual assault is synonymous with a loss of masculinity (Groth & Burgess, 1980). There is implicit victim-blaming with this myth, as it blames male survivors for their victimization. Gender roles dictate that men are supposed to enjoy sex, a male victim of sexual assault, especially one perpetrated by a woman, runs counter to society's preconceived notions about sex and gender. In one study, participants indicated that they believe male victims of

female-perpetrated assaults are likely to have encouraged and enjoyed it, and as a result experience minimal trauma (Smith, Pine, & Hawley 1988). Similar to how female rape myths condemn women survivors for failing living up to feminine gender norms, male rape myths stigmatize male survivors for "improper comportment to masculine gender norms" (Reling, Becker, Drakeford, & Valasik, 2018). Sexist beliefs about both men and women are the backbone of male and female rape myths. Male rape myths can have particularly devastating psychological effects as a result of internalization and stigma, which only exacerbate the difficulty of disclosing their experiences (Stermac, et al., 2004).

Rape Myth Acceptance and College Hookup Culture

Crucial to the conversation about campus sexual assault is hookup culture, which scholars have defined as the "social environment that encourages sexual contact free from the binds of commitment or emotional intimacy" which has dominated social life on campuses since the 1990s (Reling, Barton, Becker, & Valasik, 2018; Bogle, 2008). Hookup culture is generally framed as promoting sexual freedom and sex postivity (Wade, 2017), but it also reproduces existing hegemonic differentials in power between men and women (Currier, 2013). In the first study that examined the overlap of hookup culture and rape myth acceptance, researchers found that the endorsement of hookup culture was the single largest predictor of rape myth acceptance on college campuses (Reling et al., 2018).

There is widespread belief that hookups are harmless and there is a perception that 'hooking up' with a high-status, sexually desirable partner can elevate one's social status (Reling et al., 2018). The belief that hookups elevate social status was the strongest predictor of female

rape myth acceptance among both men and women and "the sole common predictor of male rape myth acceptance among men and women" (Reling et al., 2018). In practice, what this means is that if someone was sexually assaulted by a high-status person (e.g. a football player or the president of a high-status fraternity), the survivor would likely be met with the assumption that they "wanted it" and that the encounter was consensual because of the social status of their attacker. Conversely, the belief that hookups express sexual freedom decreased female rape myth acceptance, meaning that those who believed in hookup empowerment were more likely to believe women when they come forward with experiences of rape (Reling et al., 2018).

Rape Culture In Media and Popular Culture

According to feminist media theory, media functions as a mechanism for the hegemony to convey stereotypical and patriarchal values about women and men (Van Zoonen, 1991). Through this perspective, we can assert that rape culture is heavily enforced and influenced by media and the popular culture, as these are the images and messages that drive modern society's culture and in turn construct social attitudes and beliefs (Hepp, Hjarvard, Lundby, 2015; Orbe, 2013).

This was supported by the first quantitative analysis of rape culture in the United States, in which Harvard researchers examined over 300,000 rape-related news articles published between 2000 and 2013 from 279 mostly local newspapers across the country, compared with F.BI. crime data, and found that rape culture in the media predicts the frequency of rape and the response of the local criminal justice system (Baum, Cohen, & Zukhov, 2018). The study found that in areas where rape culture is more prevalent in the local media, there were more cases of

rape but law enforcement were less likely to pursue them (Baum et al., 2018). The metrics researchers used to assess rape culture in the media were when articles implied that victim consented, used victim-blaming language, showed empathy for the accussed, or questioned the vicitms credibility.

It would be almost irresponsible to discuss rape culture without discussing media, as college students do not exist in a vacuum and their worlds are shaped by external factors, entertainment being chief among them. The most popular show among college-aged men was, for many years, HBO's *Game of Thrones,* the winner of 59 Emmy Awards, and also perhaps the greatest example of rape culture and glorification of sexual violence in popular culture ("Top TV Shows Among U.S. College Students," 2019).

Game of Thrones was infamous for its gratuitous use of sexual violence in which women were treated as the spoils of war, and after depicting Sansa Stark's violent and graphic rape in the fifth season, blogger Tafkar conducted a "Statistical Analysis of Rape in Game of Thrones" and found that the show included 50 acts of rape or attempted rape from 2011 to 2015 (Tafkar 2015). Rape was shown as a display of male domination and conquest and very rarely were the victims shown as multi-dimensional characters, the majority of the victims existed just to be raped. In the final season, when Sansa discusses her assault with another character, she she says, "Without [my rapist and abusers], I would have stayed a little bird all my life." This falls into the classsic trope of "rape makes women stronger" and perpetuates the idea that sexual violence is ultimately a positive experience.

Effective Violence Prevention Strategies

Rape culture is both pervasive and ingrained throughout our collective consciousness, which makes preventing interpersonal violence difficult. The legislation and federal guidelines mentioned in earlier in this chapter as well as the increased commitment of IHE's to student safety have led to the development of prevention focused interventions and survivor support programming on campuses across the nation (Wood, Sulley, Kammer-Kerwick, Follingstad, & Busch-Armendariz, 2016). These approaches are focused primarily on education, training, and bystander intervention, in addition to other approaches, depending on the school.

Primary prevention. Primary prevention is the umbrella term for the best practices of violence prevention methods and is the most effective way to tackle violence at its root cause. To illustrate the concept, imagine the parable of "the stream" (Vu, 2015). There is a problem with the stream—all those who swim in it develop severe rashes as a result. The tertiary method of handling the problem teaches the villagers how to live with their rashes and offers them support; the secondary method involves hiring a lifeguard to give swimmers treatment for their rashes immediately upon exiting the water to reduce the impact (Vu, 2015). The primary prevention method involves going "upstream" to find the root of the problem and stop the factor that is causing the rashes in the first place; in this parable, a company has been dumping toxic chemicals into the stream (Vu, 2015).

When applying this concept to sexual violence, it means that to prevent sexual assault, we must go "upstream" and stop victimizations at the root of the cause through widespread education. Effective responses to interpersonal violence will employ all three levels—support to

victims and intervention—but primary prevention is the most effective way of actually preventing sexual violence from occurring (Iverson and Issadore, 2018). According to DeGue, who conducted a systematic review of prevention approaches, the strategies colleges use for sexual violence prevention must be comprehensive, appropriately-timed, varied in its teaching methods, sufficiently "dosed," socioculturally relevant, theory-driven, foster positive relationships between participants and their peers, and led by well-trained staff (DeGue et al., 2014). In order for violence prevention to be effective, it must speak to these components.

DeGue et al., explain "comprehensive programming" as multidimensional way of addressing sexual violence that utilizes multiple intervention components to address a wide range of risk factors and specifically tailoring the messaging to a variety of different populations (DeGue et al., 2014). Such programs combine skill-building and educational material with "social norm campaigns, policy changes, community interventions, and/or environmental changes" (DeGue et al., 2014). These programs must incorporate active learning methods and engage students in a variety of ways to enhance retention of the material and must also be sensitive to the relative norms of the communities which they are reaching (DeGue et al., 2014; Small et al., 2009). Furthermore, prevention programming should start earlier than college, as many students have already sexually assaulted someone before even setting foot on-campus and over 40 percent of rapes are experienced before the victim reaches 17 years of age (DeGue et al., 2014; Black, Basile, Breiding, Smith, Walters, Merrick., et al., 2010)

Bystander Intervention. Bystander intervention programming trains students to intervene in potentially harmful situations when they recognize behaviors that could be indicative of a person's intent to commit sexual violence (e.g. a student dragging an inebriated person to a more

isolated setting during a party; McMahon, Banyard, & McMahon, 2015). Research has shown that programming that trains students to be active bystanders and intervene in these kinds of situations is highly effective (McMahon et al., 2015). Further, studies have shown students who participated in bystander intervention programs are more likely to report an intent to intervene in harmful situations and that they have intervened at one point or another" (Katz and Moore, 2013; McMahon et al, 2015).

Campus Climate

Another bit of terminology that must be presently defined is *campus climate*. In *Uprooting Sexual Violence in Higher Education: A Guide for Practitioners and Faculty,* Amy Murphy and Brian Van Brunt compare the climate of a college campus to the "soil that surrounds the roots of a tree" (2017). At its core, a campus climate is the university's cultural environment, that which molds the behaviors and attitudes of the population it serves. It is the aggregation of the thoughts, actions, behaviors, backgrounds, awareness, and the education-level of students, faculty, staff, and administrators (and in our case, particularly with regards to attitudes about consent and sexual violence) as well as the factors that promote or hinder students' feelings of safety and acceptance and their ability to learn (Henry, Fowler, & West, 2011).

Campus climate can also refer to the university's response to instances of sexual violence: are reports of sexual violence dealt with or swept under the rug? What are the resources and services that are made available to survivors by the university? Are those kinds of resources even offered? And if so, what is the level of student awareness about them? Campus climate is also related to a university's prevention strategy. If a school's sexual assault messaging blames

victims (i.e. focuses on telling students not to drink rather than consent), this contributes to a campus climate that enforces dominant sexist ideologies. A campus climate may normalize sexual assault or it may reject it.

In 2014, the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault recommended that insitutions of higher education (IHE) across the country conduct surveys on their campus climate as a means of assessing students' beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and experiences related to sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and sexual harssment (WHTF, 2014). Surveys on campus climate can aid universities in better assessing and improving their programming that aims to address violence (Wood, Sulley, Kammer-Kerwick, Follingstad, Busch-Armendariz, 2017).

Cultivating Learning and Safe Environments (CLASE) Survey

The most comprehensive study to-date that measures the campus climate of UT Austin with regards to sexual violence is the CLASE study. Following the recommendations from the Obama-administration and at the direction of Chancellor William McRaven, the University of Texas System began a study of the campus climate (specifically on the prevalence of interpersonal violence) of its 13 institutions in 2015. UT Austin's Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (IDVSA) conducted the *Cultivating Learning and Safe Environments: An Empirical Study of Prevelance and Perceptions of Sexual Harassment, Stalking, Dating/Domestic Abuse and Violence, and Unwanted Sexual Contact* (CLASE) survey, the only study of its kind with regards to data about the prevalence of sexual violence at The University of Texas. UT Austin's CLASE survey was a part of the larger UT system-wide CLASE study,

which included a multi-year cohort study and an in-depth empirical investigation across the System institutions. The survey began research in the fall of 2015 and was released during the spring of 2017; specifically, it measured the prevalence of interpersonal violence of students since their enrollment at UT and students' perceptions of institutional responses to these issues (Busch-Armendariz et al., 2017).

Prevalence

CLASE found that 15 percent of female undergraduate students reported having experienced rape since their enrollment at the University of Texas at Austin (Busch-Armendariz et al., 2017). This number is consistent with national data on prevalence (Black et al., 2011), but given the size of the student body (over 40,000 undergraduates), this number looms large. The survey also found that 18 percent of all students reported having experienced unwanted sexual contact (an umbrella term synonymous with 'sexual assault' used by the researchers that includes experiences of unwanted sexual touching, attempted rape, and rape) since their enrollment (Busch-Armendariz et al., 2017).

The CLASE data on perpetration, which comes from victim reports rather than perpetrator self-identification, found that 77 percent of perpetrators of unwanted sexual contact were male (2017). The survey also reported that "most victims of unwanted sexual contact had a close relationship (44 percent) or an acquaintanceship (40 percent) with the perpetrator." This is significant because a common rape myth is that rapes are perpetrated by strangers who jump out of the bushes, when in reality, sexual violence is most often committed by someone the survivor knows. Only 16 percent of participants indicated that they were assaulted by a stranger

(Busch-Armendariz et al., 2017). To extrapolate from this data, it logically entails the importance of consent education taught as communication and respect. In terms of reducing the occurences of sexual assault, with particular emphasis on assaults which arise from a lack of affirmative consent, coercion, or incapacitation (as opposed to physical force), such instances are those that are most likely to be reduced as a result of widespread education about consent.

Students' Perceptions of Victimization Risk and Institutional Response

The researchers assessed student perceptions of the risk of victimization as well as the University's response by measuring the relative responses in terms of victims and non-victims. In measuring perceived risk of victimization, only 69 percent of victims reported that they feel safe from sexual violence, in comparison to 84 percent of nonvictims; conversely, 60 percent of victims compared to 37 percent of non-victims indicated a belief that sexual violence is a problem on campus (Busch-Armendariz et al., 2017). In assessing the student perception of the institution's response, the study found that 73 percent of victims compared to 84 percent of non-victims indicated that they believe UT Austin would take a report of violence seriously; 63 percent of victims in comparison to 79 percent of non-victims reported a belief that the University would support the person making the report.

UT Austin's Policy and Definitions

The University of Texas at Austin's *Handbook of Operating Procedures* (HOP 3-3031) uses the definition of consent below:

> **"Consent:** A voluntary, mutually understandable agreement that clearly indicates a willingness to engage in each instance of sexual activity. Consent to one act does not imply consent to another. Past consent does not imply future consent. Consent to engage in sexual activity with one person does not imply consent to engage in sexual activity with another. Consent can be withdrawn at any time. Any expression of an unwillingness to engage in any instance of sexual activity establishes a presumptive lack of consent.
>
> Consent is not effective if it results from: (a) the use of physical force, (b) a threat of physical force, (c) intimidation, (d) coercion, (e) incapacitation, or (f) any other factor that would eliminate an individual's ability to exercise his or her own free will to choose whether or not to engage in sexual activity.
>
> An individual's manner of dress or the existence of a current or previous dating or sexual relationship between two or more individuals does not, in and of itself, constitute consent to engage in a particular sexual activity. Even in the context of a relationship, there must be a voluntary, mutually understandable agreement that clearly indicates a willingness to engage in each instance of sexual activity" (HOP 3-3031).

Voices Against Violence (VAV), a program of UT's Counseling and Mental Health Center that offers comprehensive prevention and response programming, provides the following definition of consent on their website ("Consent," 2020).

> Consent to Sexual Activity is:
>
> - An enthusiastic, mutual agreement that can be revoked at any time for any reason
> - A conversation that requires consciousness and clarity
> - Asking, not assuming: a yes to one thing does not imply a yes to all things
> - Assent, meaning to agree to something after thoughtful consideration

In short - consent is a YES when it is OK to say NO!

Impressively, the University has an objectively robust definition of consent. The VAV definition and the UT HOP definition are essentially the same, except VAV's definition is written with more brevity and in plainer language. But UT gets credit for debunking rape myths in its insitutional definition when it says that "an individual's manner of dress" does not constitute consent.

The University of Texas at Austin's *Handbook of Operating Procedures* (HOP 3-3031) defines sexual assault below:

"Sexual Assault: An offense that meets the definition of rape, fondling, incest, or statutory rape.

> **Rape:** The penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the complainant.
>
> **Fondling:** The touching of the private body parts (including, but not limited to the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or buttocks) of another person for the purpose of sexual gratification, without the consent of the complainant, including instances where the complainant is incapable of giving consent because of the complainant's age or because of the complainant's temporary or permanent mental incapacity.
>
> **Incest:** Sexual intercourse between persons who are related to each other within the degrees wherein marriage is prohibited by law.
>
> **Statutory Rape:** Sexual intercourse with a person who is younger than 17 years of age and is not a spouse of the respondent."

Voices Against Violence provides a definition for sexual violence on its website:

> "Sexual violence is any kind of sexual contact against a person's will and without consent. Sexual violence can happen to anyone, no matter their age, gender-identity, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, class background, religion, or ability.
>
> Some commonly heard terms that fall under the umbrella of sexual violence include:
>
> - Sexual Assault: Any unwanted sexual contact, including intercourse, touching, or oral sexual stimulation that is performed without consent, often through the use or threat of force.
> - Rape: Any kind of sexual intercourse (penetration) - vaginal, oral, or anal - that is committed against a person's will or is committed with physical force or the threat of force. Intercourse during which the victim is drunk, unconscious or otherwise considered unable to consent is also rape. Rape is a subcategory of sexual assault."

The Title IX Office at UT Austin defines sexual violence as:

- Any kind of sexual contact against a person's will and without consent.
- It can happen to anyone and it is not the fault of the person who has been harmed.
- It can be perpetrated by someone you know and trust, and it can happen in the workplace or educational environment.
- Sex discrimination and sexual violence can affect anyone, no matter your gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ability status, race, ethnicity, religion, spirituality, immigration status, or any other part of your identity.

Title IX and Voices Against Violence provide an umbrella refer to sexual violence while the University's official definition for sexual is written from a legal framework and cites specific actions ranging from fondling to rape. There is a great deal of consistency across the University

from its programmatic messaging to its official policy with regards to how it defines consent and sexual violence.

Measuring Rape Culture and Consent

Levels of rape myth acceptance on college campuses are measured by two scales: 1) the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance (IRMA) Scale (Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999) and 2) the Subtle Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). The IRMA is a 45-item scale in which student participants list their agreement with rape myth statements. The Subtle Rape Myth Acceptance Scale builds upon the IRMA and looks more closely at victim-blaming. There have not been many studies that specifically examine consent culture, much less on college campuses, meaning that this thesis is among the first to do so. The majority of academic literature focuses on rape culture or prevalance, not consent culture, so this thesis aims to fill in the gaps left open by a lack of prior research.

Humphreys & Herold (2007) developed two scales that measure consent: 1) the Sexual Consent Attitudes Scale and 2) the Sexual Consent Behaviors Scale. The Sexual Consent Attitudes Scale measures how participants feel towards consent and their beliefs about it and the Sexual Consent Behaviors Scale assesses participants' self-reported actions about how they navigate consent in their sexual relationships. In the present study a new scale is constructed that synthesizes all of these existing scales to form a new way of measuring consent culture. Chapter IV will discuss the survey that was conducted for this thesis, which builds on the CLASE data from 2017 and focuses heavily on consent, rather than prevalence of sexual violence. The study's aim was to provide accurate, up-to-date information about students' perceptions of sexual assault

at The University of Texas, their knowledge on consent, and insight into whether or not there is a presence of a consent culture on campus.

But if a consent culture in any form exists on this campus, it is a result of the work of the dedicated individuals who have been working tirelessly to build it over the last two decades. This chapter describes the infrastructure on campus that is already in place to prevent interpersonal violence and support survivors on campus, the following chapter seeks to examine if this programming is working.

III. EXISTING PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES ON CAMPUS

This chapter does the necssary work of delineating the existing programs, initiatives, and organizations on campus that work to prevent and respond to sexual violence. Some of these efforts are the work of staff, others of students; some are sanctioned by the University and others are not. A consent culture cannot be built from nothing, it comes from the effort of many. If such a culture exists at all, it is a result of these efforts. 14 interviews with staff and students (via phone and in-person) were conducted to provide background knowledge and additional insight for this chapter.

University Programming

Primary Prevention

Voices Against Violence. The University of Texas at Austin's robust and comprehensive interpersonal violence prevention and survivor support program is Voices Against Violence (VAV), housed in the Longhorn Wellness Center and Counseling and Mental Health Center and founded in 2001 through a grant made possible by the Violence Against Women Act ("History of VAV," 2020). VAV addresses interpersonal violence on campus through four main pillars: prevention, education and awareness, intervention, and response (Burrows, 2014). The program adheres to many of the best practices for violence prevention, as it is comprehensive, utilizes different learning methods, and also provides an extensive response program for survivors of interpersonal violence (DeGue et al., 2014).

On the prevention side of VAV is its "Theatre for Dialogue" (TFD) program, annual interpersonal violence prevention months (April and October) that include dynamic events, educational workshops and training, informational poster campaigns, and its sponsored student organization ("About VAV," 2020). TFD includes two interactive theatre performances, "I Like, Like You" (which focuses on healthy relationships) and "Get Sexy. Get Consent" (GSGC) (which focuses on promoting consent; "Theatre for Dialogue," 2020). GSGC is an interactive hour long performance that utilizes theatre scenes, monologues, and direct conversations with students to educate them on identifying their boundaries, practicing safety, and teaching how to navigate negotiating consent ("GSGC," 2020). The workshop also explores the many different kinds of relationships and topics that could arise in sexual situations ("GSGC," 2020). According to research conducted by VAV in post-performance feedback surveys, 75 percent of participants indicated that as a result of what they learned from the performance, they would act differently in future sexual encounters ("GSGC," 2020). TFD performances are conducted by student actors who have been trained through its year-long accredited course and are performed for groups on campus such as athletes, Greek community members, and student organizations ("Theatre for Dialogue," 2020). In the 2017-2018 academic year, Theatre for Dialogue conducted 20 performances and reached 545 people ("Impact Statement," 2018).

The VAV program also offers a multitude of workshops that engage students in conversations about a variety of topics such as consent, healthy relationships and social media, interpersonal violence and bystander intervention, dating violence and stalking, an introductory workshop about the VAV program, and building a survivor-centered community ("Get Involved," 2020). These workshops are conducted with the aim of providing students with the

ability to prevent interpersonal violence on campus through their interactions with other students and in their personal lives ("Get Involved," 2020). Thirty-two workshops and trainings were facilitated by Voices Against Violence in the 2017-2018 school year ("Impact Statement," 2018). Furthermore, VAV partners with UT's New Student Services each year to train Orientation Advisors to provide programming for freshman orientation, and since 2001, VAV has reached over 136,335 students via orientation ("Impact Statement," 2018).

Voices Against Violence also organizes Sexual Violence Prevention Month (April) and Relationship Violence Prevention Month (October), two main outreach programs that include a variety of large-scale public events that address interpersonal violence, increase education and awareness, seek to prevent interpersonal violence from occurring, and provide a community of support to surviors. VAV's informational poster campaigns generally coincide with the prevention months, provide information about consent and interpersonal violence, and are disseminated throughout buildings on campus in order to raise awareness. The first poster campaign, "No One's Asking For It" was launched in 2013 to promote consent and after the results from a qualitative survey showed that many students had misinterpretations of consent (e.g. believing a verbal "no" is the only indicator of a lack of consent; Mabry & Burrows, 2014), a second campaign was launched that highlighted the ways in which a lack of consent is communicated other than verbal "no"s (Burrows, 2015; Burrows, 2013). The follow-up campaign, "UT Gets Consent" included photographs of U.T. student leaders holding handwritten signs with statements such as, "'Wait…' means NO," "Wasted means NO," "Pulling away means NO," and "'I'm too tired means NO" (Burrows, 2015).

Title IX. In addition to reports and its investigations, the Title IX Office at UT offers educational training for UT students and professional development for UT faculty and staff. Currently, two workshops are offered by the department: 1) "Title IX Basics," which covers Title IX policies and process, state law, UT's sexual misconduct policy, mandatory reporting, strategies for intervention, and the support resources available to those impacted by Title IX-related incidents and 2) "Are We Okay? Tools and Tips for Communicating our Boundaries," an interactive workshop focused on teaching communication of one's boundaries and expectations to sexual partners ("Education and Training," 2020).

Sexual Assault Prevention for Undergraduates (SAPU). While the University has robust prevention programming, the only piece of education that is mandatory for all UT Austin undergradutates students is Sexual Assault Prevention for Undergradutaes (SAPU), online modules and tests which are taken by all freshmen and transfer students ("AlcoholEdu and Sexual Assault Prevention for Undergraduates, 2020"). If a student fails to complete this program by the prescribed deadline, they are unable to see their course grades for that semester ("AlcoholEdu and SAPU," 2020).

Bystander Intervention

BeVocal. Founded in 2012, BeVocal, the Bystander Intervention Initiative of The University of Texas at Austin, focuses on a wide variety of topics that students are likely to face during their years on campus (e.g. interpersonal violence, racism, binge-drinking, etc.; "BeVocal," 2018). Guided by the motto, "Longhorns take care of each other," BeVocal promulgates the idea that individual students have the ability and the power to prevent harm in

high-risk situations and teaches students three simple steps for intervention: “1) recognize potential harm, 2) choose to respond and 3) take action” (“The BeVocal Model,” 2018). According to a survey conducted by the BeVocal team, the initiative appears to have contributed to increasing the number of students who reported intervening in instances of interpersonal violence (“BeVocal Executive Summary,” 2015). Since the success of BeVocal, replications of the initiative now exist at all institutions across The University of Texas System.

Survivor Support

While we know prevention work is critical in dismantling rape culture and stopping the scourge of campus sexual assault, the other side of the coin is the response component—providing survivors with support, resources, and options. A key feature of a culture that is upending rape culture is having survivor-centered practices and systems on the interpersonal, school, and community levels.

Voices Against Violence. VAV’s support program is as comprehensive as its prevention wing, offering student survivors individual and group counseling, advocacy services to help survivors understand their rights and options and assist with safety planning, as well as access to the VAV Survivor’s Emergency Fund, which provides survivors with financial assistance for any costs related to their experience (“Services for Survivors,” 2020). In an interview, VAV Clinical Coordinator Leah Leeds spoke to the intentionality behind the clinical programming, so that the work being done models the best practices found in community-based advocacy models (L. Leeds, personal communication, March 11, 2020). For example, VAV provides free, short-term counseling with trauma specialists, as well as a variety of group options, most recently creating

additional spaces with an emphasis on supporting student advocates and activists and community building (rather than therapy) and allowing for some groups to be conducted on a drop-in basis and for some to be on-going and continuing beyond one semester (L. Leeds, personal communication, March 11, 2020).

The Advocate. Outside of the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) and University Health Services (UHS), there is only one full-time employee at the University who is a designated non-mandatory reporter to Title IX. UT refers to this program as the "Advocates," but given that there is only one of them, this thesis will refer to this program as "the Advocate" (if one employee can even rightfully be considered a program), for the purpose of accuracy and to not use plurality as a misnomer. The Advocate program was created in 2017 in response to the CLASE survey to increase the number of confidential support options for students. Housed under Student Emergency Services (SES) in the Office of the Dean of Students, the Advocate, Bree Van Ness, is a staff member who provides individual support, referrals to resources both on and off-campus, and information regarding Title IX rights and options to students who have been impacted by interpersonal violence; the Advocate can also provide students with academic, medical, housing, and/or financial accommodations ("Advocacy and Support," 2020). Initially, there was one more Advocate, Breall Baccus, who was housed in the Title IX Office, but despite Baccus leaving the University a year ago, her position has not yet been filled, leaving Van Ness as the sole Advocate for over 51,000 students (B. Baccus, personal communication, April 7, 2020; B. Van Ness, personal communication, January 9, 2020).

Interpersonal Violence Peer Support. The Interpersonal Violence Peer Support (IVPS) program is a group of highly trained students who provide private peer advocacy and support to students who have experienced or been impacted by interpersonal violence and is functionally similar to the Advocate program in terms of the services it provides (e.g. support, referrals, information, resources, and accommodations; "Advocacy and Support," 2020). What sets IVPS apart from the Advocate program is that the peer supporters are students, which creates an inherently low-pressure dynamic and is valuable because studies show that after students experience an incident of interpersonal violence, they are more likely to disclose to a peer before anyone else (Cusano & McMahon, 2019; Busch-Armendariz et al., 2017; Milliken et al., 2016 Ahrens et al., 2007; Fisher et al., 2003; Starzynski et al., 2005). IVPS is supervised by the Advocate, is housed in Student Emergency Services (SES), and was created in partnership between Voices Against Violence and the Title IX Office and it is the only entity on campus in which students provide direct support to survivors of interpersonal violence. The program is currently finishing its third year of operations and has trained around 15 students each academic year and while IVPS is a University-sponsored program, its creation originated from the effort of students (Wong, 2018). IVPS also conducts peer education workshops, "How to Support a Survivor" that share the skills the peers learned throughout their training with other students.

Student Involvement

Student Organizations

VAV Student Org. Voices Against Violence's student organization works to prevent interpersonal violence and create a consent culture on campus. The organization and VAV staff

work in tandem to create dynamic, interactive, and educational events for Sexual Violence Prevention Month and Relationship Violence Prevention Month, such as Consent Fest and Rally for Relationships ("Get Involved," 2020). The organization also plans large, public survivor speak-out events (e.g. Take Back the Night, Breaking the Silence) that provide survivors with a space to heal and share their stories, connect to resources, and find a community of support ("Get Involved," 2020). A survivor-centered organization, the weekly meetings of the VAV student org itself also function as a space for many survivors to heal through activism and find indirect support within the community (A. Kuchek, personal communication, May 10, 2020).

Not On My Campus - Texas Chapter. Not On My Campus (NOMC) began in 2015 at Southern Methodist University as a social media campaign and it is now an organization that offers a peer education program that trains organization leaders on issues of sexual assault, bystander intervention, and supporting survivors through workshops given once each semester ("Peer Education," 2020). Attendees of the workshops then deliver presentations to their respective organizations to share what they have learned through the training. Not On My Campus's peer education model has had particular success within the Greek community, as NOMC has its roots in Greek life and community members educating their peers makes the material socioculturally relevant and increases retention of the material (DeGue, 2014; T. Zeko, personal communication, May 10, 2020; S. Jerwick, personal communication, May 11, 2020).

MenCanEnd. MenCanEnd, originally a project of the Texas Blazers (an all-male service and spirit organization), is a committee that gets men involved in interpersonal violence prevention work and is dedicated to promoting healthy masculinity around campus through

spreading discussions of healthy masculinity around campus ("MenCanEnd," 2020). On their website, MenCanEnd discuss their role on campus, "By explicitly linking the idea of unhealthy masculinity to rape culture, we hope to do primary prevention work to reduce violence in our world" ("MenCanEnd," 2020).

It's On Us. It's On Us is an initiative brought forth by the Obama administration and UT's chapter of the organization has emerged within the last few years; it is a student organization that works towards Title IX reform and centers around survivor support ("It's On Us," 2020). It's On Us at UT Austin also aims to easily connect students with resources, as their website prominently features links to file a Title IX report and make an appointment with The Advocate.

Women's Resource Agency. The Women's Resource Agency (WRA) is a woman-centered agency of Student Government that addresses a whole host of women's issues, among them, interpersonal violence. WRA's largest contribution to the realm of IPV is the production of *Amplify: UT Women's Voices*, a collection of monologues that are written and performed by women at UT—it is essentially a more inclusive and UT-centric version of *The Vagina Monologues* ("Amplify: UT Women's Voices. Stories of interpersonal violence are prominently featured in the performance and all proceeds from the event go towards the VAV Survivor's Emergency Fund; in 2017, the first year of production, *Amplify* raised over $5,000 for the fund and was attended by roughly 400 students (R. Sostek, personal communication, April 24, 2020).

Interpersonal Violence Prevention Coalition. Founded in 2016, the Coalition is a collaboration between prevention student organizations that focus on interpersonal violence, which unites the aforementioned campus groups (in addition to some others) for prevention programming during known times where spikes in sexual assaults occur, otherwise known as "red-zones" (Reiter, 2018; Grobe, 2018). These initiatives include "Hooked On OUr Safety," which targets the weekend of the TX-OU football game, and "Roundup for Consent," which targets the Greek life fundraiser known for the debauchery at its parties (Mata, 2018; Atkinson, Becker, Sundaram, & Mockler, 2017).

Student Activism

One indication of cultural shifts on this campus is the grassroots activism that has emerged in recent years—students are protesting, organizing, and creating change because they are no longer tolerating the status quo and are becoming more aware (and sickened by) the pervasiveness rape culture.

Stand With Survivors Rally. In October 2018, after the confirmation to the U.S. Supreme Court of Brett Kavanaugh—who, during his Senate hearing, was accused of sexual assaulting Dr. Christine Blasey-Ford—and the subsequent rallying of the Young Conservatives of Texas in support of his confirmation, students staged a counter-protest to stand in solidarity with survivors (Dunning, Nguyen, Justin, & Balevic, 2018). The Stand With Survivors Rally was attended by dozens of students who formed a human blockade on Speedway, a main street on campus (Menchaca, 2018). A ripple effect of this protest and the impact of the Kavanaugh hearings on students was that it prompted VAV to create a drop-in support group for activists involved in

interpersonal violence prevention, so that they could find a supportive space for community with one another (L. Leeds, personal communication, March 11, 2020).

Coalition Against Sexual Misconduct. In the fall of 2019, when UT placed two professors who were found guilty of sexual misconduct (and previously suspended) on the course schedule, it sparked outrage among students, who took to grassroots organizing. Different groups of protesters staged five sit-ins over the course of a few months and after the third sit-in, coalesced to form the Coalition Against Sexual Misconduct (CASM).

Angela Kang, a CASM leader and protest organizer, described in an interview feeling like there was immense pushback from the University, citing police presence at protests and the fact that it took five sit-ins, four months, and national media attention for the University to capitulate and stop ignoring student voices (A. Kang, personal communication, May 10, 2020). This is evidence of a dichotomy between the student body, which advocates for campus safety and accountability, and the administration, which tries to sweep sexual misconduct under the rug and silence the students it's supposed to protect. At the forum in January, when asked by multiple students to say if UT's sexual misconduct policies were failing students, University President Gregory Fenves admitted, "Yes, we have failed you" (Grobe & Morales, 2020).

As a result of the tireless activism of the CASM students and accepting the recommendations from a review conducted by an external firm, the University agreed to make several major changes to its policy and response to sexual misconduct (Husch Blackwell, 2020):

- Confidential On-Campus Resources to Be Featured, Consolidated, and Expanded
- Implement Presumptive Termination for Certain Sex Misconduct

- Proactively Disclose Names of Employees Found Responsible for Certain Sex Misconduct
- Differentiate Between Qualitatively Different Forms of Sexual Misconduct in a Revised Policy
- Develop and Implement Alternative Resolution Options and Restorative Justice for Sex Discrimination Matters
- Instead of Optional Training, Require Mandatory Training for University Employees
- Implement Timelines for Resolutions and Options for Participants in Untimely Cases

These changes, once enacted, will have a resounding impact on the way in which the University handles incidents of sexual misconduct. But if CASM showed anything, it is that students care about these issues and are passionate enough to stand up to power and fight.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Methodology

The primary aim of this study was to develop a measure for examining consent culture and to better understand the campus climate surrounding consent and sexual assault, using students' perceptions, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors as a lens. These findings are the result of a web-based survey. The study was initially going to include supplemental empirical evidence from interviews with students who were sent the survey and indicated that they would like to share their experiences in a more in-depth format. Unfortunately, due to the spread of SARS-CoV-2, student interviews were canceled and were not able to be rescheduled. Luckily, the interviews with staff members that bolstered the information in the previous chapter were conducted prior to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Consent and Sexual Assault at UT Austin Survey

The survey tackled three main research questions:

1. What do students' perceptions, awareness, and behaviors tell us about the campus climate?
2. What is the level of understanding students have about consent?
3. What do the answers to the above questions mean for a consent culture?

Participation in this study was both voluntary and anonymous, and the survey did not record any identifying information that would breach students' privacy. This study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at UT Austin (IRB approval No. 2019-09-0155).

Participants

A total of 246 (*n*) participants, comprised of 178 self-identified females, 61 males, and 9 transgender/genderqueer/nonbinary (TGQN) individuals from The University of Texas at Austin took part in this study. Unfortunately, the sample size from TGQN students was too small to allow for accurate statistical discussion of that community's specific experience, so the majority of the findings will be discussed in primarily gender binary terms and their data is not included in the figures. See Appendix A. for data on TGQN students. Illustrated in Table 1 below is an in-depth picture of survey demographics.

Table 1. Demographics (n = 246)

Characteristic	*n*	%
Gender		
Male	62	25.2
Female	178	72.3
TGQN*	9	3.6
Classification		
Freshman	29	11.8
Sophomore	42	17.1
Junior	52	21.1
Senior	80	32.5
Graduate	34	13.8
Staff/Faculty	9	3.7

* 2 TGQN participants identified as another sex/gender in addition to TGQN, which accounts for the the sum of *n* equaling 248 rather than 246.

Classification was the second metric of demographic collection. 32.5 percent of participants classified themselves as seniors, 21.1 percent as juniors, 17.1 percent as sophomores, 13.8 percent as graduate students, 11.8 percent as freshmen, and 3.7 as staff or faculty. These statistics do not align with the general UT Austin statistics of classification, as each class year is roughly a quarter of the undergraduate population. The reason for this discrepancy in representation could be due to the fact that non-first year students may be more involved in student organizations or occupy leadership roles within those organizations because the sample of students comes from those who are involved in campus extracurriculars. The survey was distributed to over one thousand leaders of student organizations and it was requested that the survey be forwarded to their organization's membership. The staff and faculty members who took the survey were likely advisors to student organizations.

According to the most recent numbers on the student population provided by the University ("Facts & Figures," 2019), there are a total of 51,832 students at UT (including 40,804 undergraduates and 11,028 graduate students). Of these, 52.7 percent of the student body are women and 47.3 percent are men. Because participants in this study were 72 percent female and 25.8 percent male, and 2.2 percent TGQN, this survey is a non-representative of the UT student body and is classified as a convenience sample.

Procedures

This survey was conducted online via Qualtrics, a secure web-based survey software. Qualtrics is UT Austin's preferred platform for administering surveys because the site meets strict data security requirements and is approved for classified information such as HIPAA, FERPA, and IRB. The survey was self-administered, could be taken on computers or mobile devices, and took participants an average of three minutes to complete. The survey collected certain demographic information (eg. gender and classification), but was anonymous and no identifying data was collected. Participants were invited to take the survey via email through student organizations; a Qualtrics link was sent to 1,087 student organization leaders with the request that they forward the survey to their membership. It is unclear how many students in total received the link and therefore it is impossible to know the response rate for the survey. However, if we assume that the link was not forwarded by any of the initial 1,087 recipients, then the response rate is 22.5 percent. No incentives were given for participation. The survey collected data from January 28, 2020 to March 30, 2020.

Design

Building upon previous measures of sexual consent and rape culture, the present study developed a new measurement: the Campus Consent Culture Scale (CCCS). The Campus Consent Culture Scale consists of 12 items and measured three primary categories: 1) the campus climate as it relates to sexual assault, 2) the level of students' consent awareness and education,

and 3) students' consent behaviors. Participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed with various questions. Responses are chosen from a 7-point Likert scale measuring agreement or on a 6-point or 4-point Likert scale that measures frequency. Sample items from this scale include: "I always ask my partner(s) for consent before engaging in sexual activity;" "Sexual assault is a problem at The University of Texas at Austin;" "I know what my sexual boundaries are and I am able to express them." The full list of items is available in Table 2.

Campus Climate Items

While it could be argued that every item on the CCCS measures campus climate, only three specifically targeted it directly. These items were based on research that described campus climate as being composed of the institutional culture, student perceptions, existence and awareness of resources, and students' feelings of safety (Murphy & Van Brunt, 2017; Henry, Fowler, & West, 2011). The three items that measured campus climate assessed students' perceptions of the risk of victimization, their perceptions of the institutional response to sexual assault, and their knowledge of campus resources and reporting options.

Consent Awareness Items

Three items measured consent awareness. First, students' perception of their own knowledge about consent and second, their perceptions of their peers' level of consent education. The second item was hypothesized to be more telling about the consent culture at the University because the first item lends itself to social desirability bias, as people tend to overestimate their knowledge when self-reporting data (Ackerman, Beier, & Bowen, 2002; Kruger & Dunning,

1999). The final consent awareness item was a free response question that asked students to write their own definitions of consent, which allowed for the assessment of the real level of students' understanding of consent, beyond simply asking if they know what consent is. (This item will be discussed in more depth in the Open-Ended Items section.)

Consent Behavior Items

Modeled after Humphreys and Herold's (2007) Sexual Consent Behaviors Scale, though not identical, five items measured students' sexual consent behaviors, specifically focusing on dynamics within a sexual relationship, the frequency of consent discussions, and expression of boundaries. Example items include: "I know what my sexual boundaries are and I am able to express them"; "My partner(s) asks me for consent before engaging in sexual activity"; and "How often do you think about consent?"

Free-Response Items

There were two open-ended response questions. The first opened-ended question asked students to provide their own definition of consent, so we could more accurately measure their level of consent awareness and education. The definitions students provided were measured using a subscale we constructed labeled *Actual Consent Knowledge*, which assessed each definition through the significant dimensions of sexual consent. The method for scoring the responses (1-5) was based on how many factors of consent were included in the response and how close the student came to standard, widely-accepted definitions of sexual consent. In order to accurately score the responses, the definition of consent was broken up by thematic dimension

and respondents were given a point each per dimension that was covered. These dimensions were:

1) Clarity (e.g “conscious,” “sober,” “understanding,” “clear,” etc.)

2) Agreement: (e.g. “assent,” “enthusiastic yes,” “mutual,” and “conversation,” etc.)

3) Ongoing: (e.g. “revocable,” “continuous,” and “checking-in,” etc.)

4) Voluntary: (e.g. “not coerced,” “not forced,” “willing,” and “able,” etc.)

Responses that addressed all of the dimensions of consent and were accurate were given 5’s, responses that addressed a majority the pieces of consent were given 4’s, responses that included two features but left out critical aspects were given 3’s, responses that included one dimension were given 2’s, and responses that left out all of the components of consent or provided incorrect definitions were given 1’s. Responses were not given more than one point per dimension, so if someone described consent as an “enthusiastic, mutual agreement,” they would be scored as a 2. The *Actual Consent Knowledge* subscale allowed for the quantitative analysis of qualitative data.

The last question asked students to list any final thoughts, comments, and concerns that they wanted to share with the researchers. The purpose of this item was to allow for a more in-depth understanding of what students’ thoughts, feelings, and beliefs really were, thus painting an empirical and detailed picture of the campus culture. The item was measured using a thematic analysis and several recurring themes were identified. This question was included because research has shown that surveys provide participants with a low-pressure, anonymous way to report their experiences, whether good, bad, or even traumatic (Cantalupo, 2014). Given

the low rates of reporting at the University, it is important to provide another avenue that allows students to be heard. In fact, there were two respondents to the survey who indicated anonymously that they have experienced sexual assault while at the University. After the conclusion of the survey, students were provided with UT's Voices Against Violence program's comprehensive definition of consent and were given a list of campus resources.

Hypothesis

Based on the research conducted on rape culture and sexual consent, in addition to the prevalence study study of prevalence of sexual violence at the University of Texas at Austin, in addititon to research on rape culture and sexual consent, it was hypothesized that male and female students would differ on the scale. For instance, it was hypothesized that women, as a a result of disproportionate rates of victimization in comparison to men, would perceive campus sexual assault to be more more of a problem than their male peers. It was also hypothesized that there would be divergence in responses among classification as a result of the objective difference between the experience of being in one's first-year of college versus their final.

Table 2. Campus Consent Culture Scale Items

1. Demographics
   A. Gender
      a. *Male, female, transgender/genderqueer/nonbinary, other)*
   B. Classification
      a. *Freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate student, staff/faculty*)
2. Campus Climate
   A. Student Perception of Campus Climate with Regards to Sexual Assault
      a. "Sexual assault is a problem at The University of Texas at Austin."
   B. Perception of Institutional Response
      a. "The University of Texas at Austin takes sexual assault seriously."
   C. Knowledge of Campus Resources for Survivors of Interpersonal Violence
      a. "I am aware of what campus resources and/or reporting options are available should I need them."
3. Consent Education
   A. Perception of Personal Consent Knowledge
      a. *"I know what consent is"*
      b. *"I know what my sexual boundaries are and I am able to express them"*
   B. Perception of Peers' Consent Education
      a. *"Most students know what consent is"*
   C. Consent Behaviors
      a. *"I know how to ask my sexual partners for consent"*
      b. *"I ask my partner(s) for consent before engaging in sexual activity."*
      c. *"My partner(s) asks me for consent before engaging in sexual activity."*
      d. *How often do you think about consent?*
4. Free Response
      e. *To me, consent is defined as…*
      f. *Any other thoughts, comments, or concerns you would like to share?*

Results

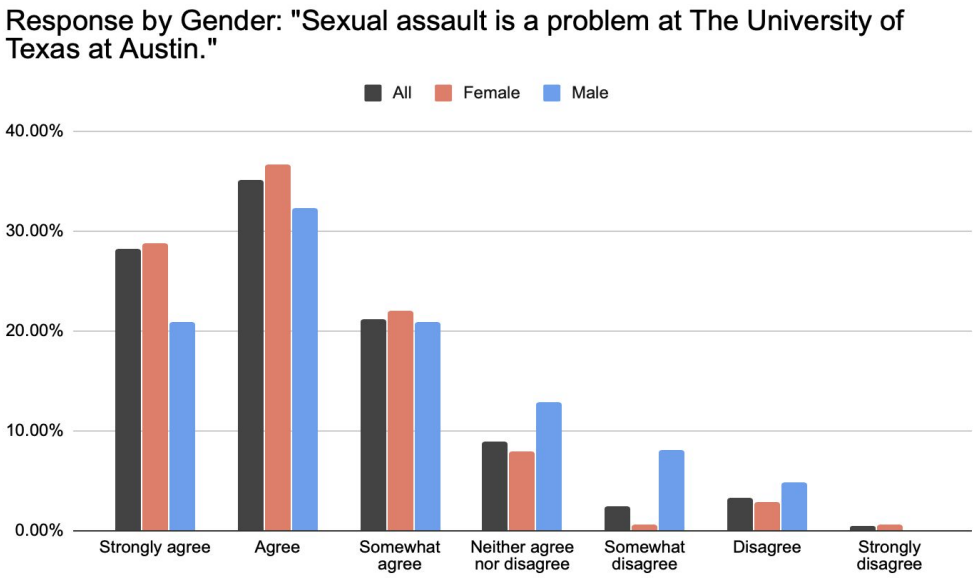
The survey findings discussed below are discussed through the lens of the consent culture factor each item measures. There are two main sections: campus climate climate and consent education (which includes subsections on consent knowledge/awareness as well as behaviors), in addition there is a section that thematically analyzes the two free response questions. There is ample overlap between items and various sections because these themes do not exist in a vacuum, in fact, they all inform one another. Each item is discussed in-depth, but only the most poignant points of data are discussed. To see the full results of the study, see Appendix A.

Campus Climate

"Sexual assault is a problem at The University of Texas at Austin." This item measures the extent that students believe sexual violence is a problem on campus, which is directly related to the campus climate. For the statement, "Sexual assault is a problem at the University of Texas at Austin," 84.5 percent of all respondents indicated that they either strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed, while 15 percent of respondents indicated that they did not agree with the statement. Only 6.1 percent of students indicated some degree of disagreement and of those, only .4 percent of participants strongly disagreed. The data revealed some differences between men and women; female respondents indicated that sexual assault is more of a problem than did male respondents. A total of 87.5 percent of women indicated that they believe sexual assault is a problem in comparison to 74.1 percent of men. Only 4.5 percent of women indicated that they

disagree with the statement, while 21 percent of men disagreed. Though only a small sample size, 100 percent of TGQN students indicated that they believe sexual assault is a problem. The data was not included on the chart because of the small sample size, but 100 percent was a significant enough percentage to make a note of here.

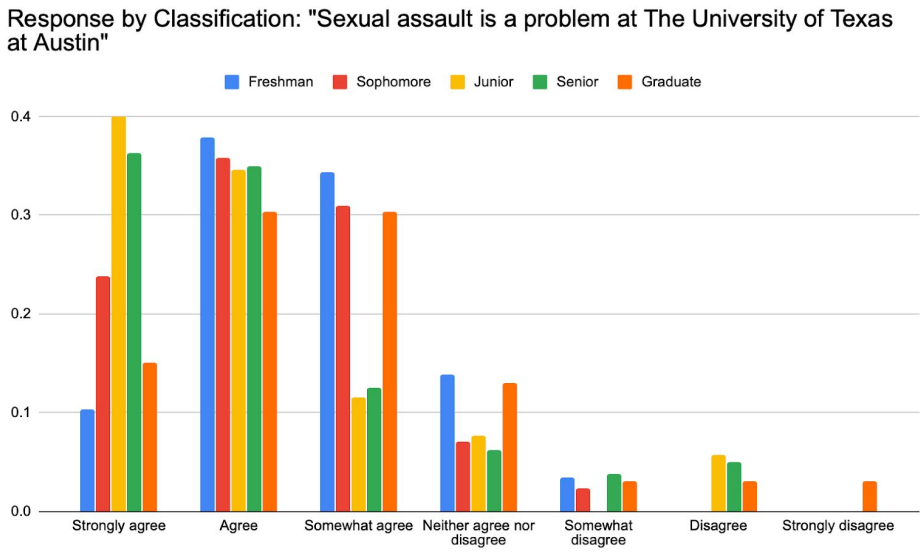
Figure 1. Perception of Scope by Gender



Broken up by classification, further divides emerge, as evidenced by Figure 2 on the following page. Juniors and seniors are more likely to believe that sexual assault is a problem than freshmen and sophmores. 40 percent of juniors and 36 percent of seniors strongly agree, compared to 10 percent of freshmen, 24 percent of sophomores, and 15 percent of graduate students. However, all classifications of respondents indicated similar rates of general agreement (somewhat agreeing, agreeing, or strongly agreeing) that sexual assault is a problem: 83 percent of freshman, 91 percent of sophomores, 86 percent of juniors, 84 percent of seniors, and 76

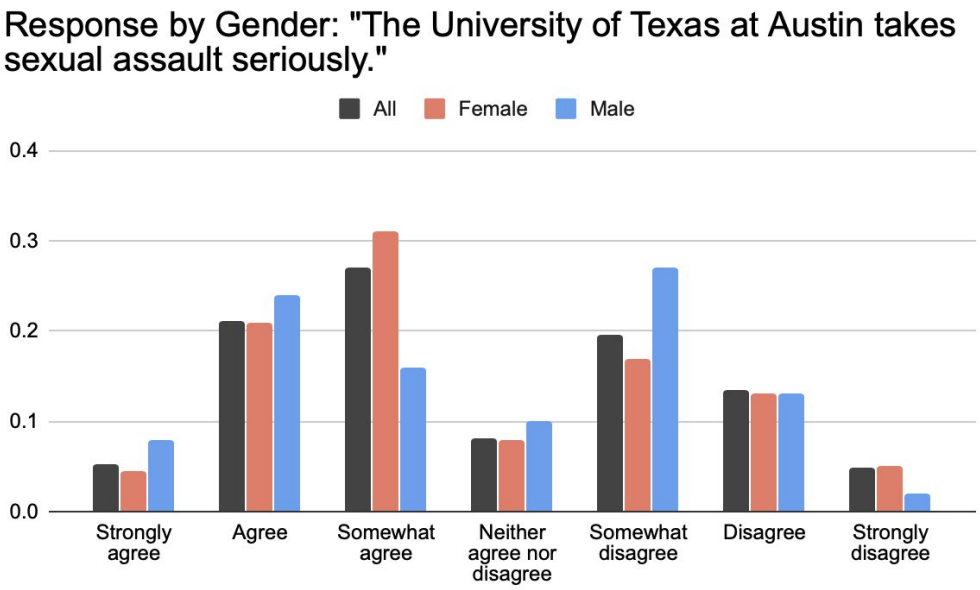
percent of graduate students. Only one respondent indicated that they strongly disagreed with the statement.

Figure 2. Perception of Scope by Classification



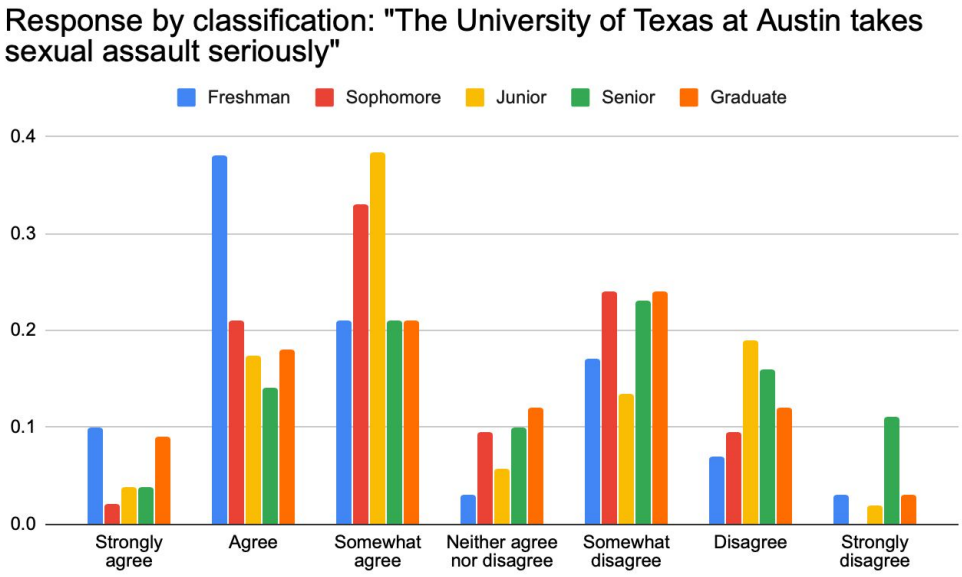
"The University of Texas at Austin takes sexual assault seriously." The purpose of this item was to gain an insight into participants' perceptions of how the University deals with sexual assault. In response to the statement, "The University of Texas at Austin takes sexual assault seriously," only 5.3 percent of students indicated that they strongly agree and only 26.5 percent of participants indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed. When broken down by gender, we see that 8 percent of male respondents and 4.5 percent of female respondents strongly agreed that UT takes sexual assault seriously, men nearly doubling women. When including "agree" responses, we see that 32 percent of men and 25.5 percent of women agree or strongly agree with the statement, which is a significant variation.

Figure 3. Perception of Institutional Response by Gender



There was also a significant variation between participants' responses when broken down by classification. Freshman are the most likely to believe that the University of Texas at Austin takes sexual assault seriously, with 48 percent of first-year respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. Twenty-three percent of sophomores agreed or strongly agreed, along with 21 percent of juniors, and 17.8 percent of seniors. This may indicate that the longer undergraduate students spend at the University, the less likely they are to think that the University takes sexual assault seriously. Students are relatively split on this subject. The majority of students lie on either side of somewhat agreeing or disagreeing and a minority of students have strong feelings about this, either way. However, for a question that assesses students' perceptions of the institution's response to an issue that impacts them, it is not encouraging to see that only one would hope that (More on this will be discussed in the discussion section.)

Figure 4. Perception of Institutional Response by Classification



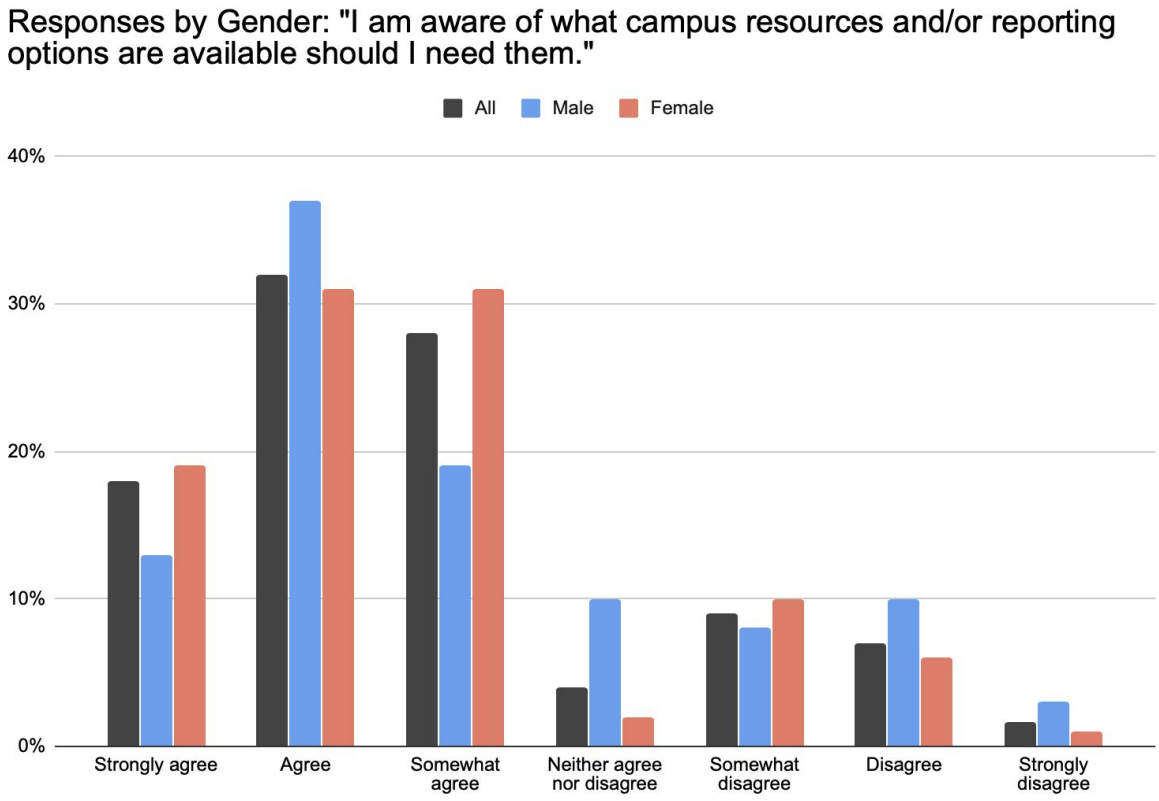
Only 10 percent of freshmen disagree or strongly disagree that the University takes sexual assault seriously, and 9.5 percent of sophomores disagree or strongly disagree; 21 percent of juniors disagree or strongly disagree; and 27 percent of seniors disagree or strongly disagree. It is worth noting that only 5.3 percent of participants strongly agree that the University takes this issue seriously. Across the board, strong agreement for this item is low: 10 percent of freshman, 2 percent of sophomores, 3.8 percent of juniors, 3.8 percent of seniors, 9 percent of graduate students, and 11 percent of staff and faculty strongly agreed that the University takes sexual assault seriously.

"I am aware of what campus resources and/or reporting options are available should I need them." As discussed in the literature review, one of the building blocks of a campus climate as it relates to sexual violence is the resources that the University offers for those impacted, but just as important is the level of student awareness about these resources. This item measures

student's awareness about support resources for survivors, which is another metric for analyzing campus climate. 79 percent of survey participants indicated some degree of awareness about campus resources, but only 50 percent of respondents had relatively strong confidence in their knowledge, as 18 percent of students strongly agreed, 32 percent agreed, 28 percent of students somewhat agreed.

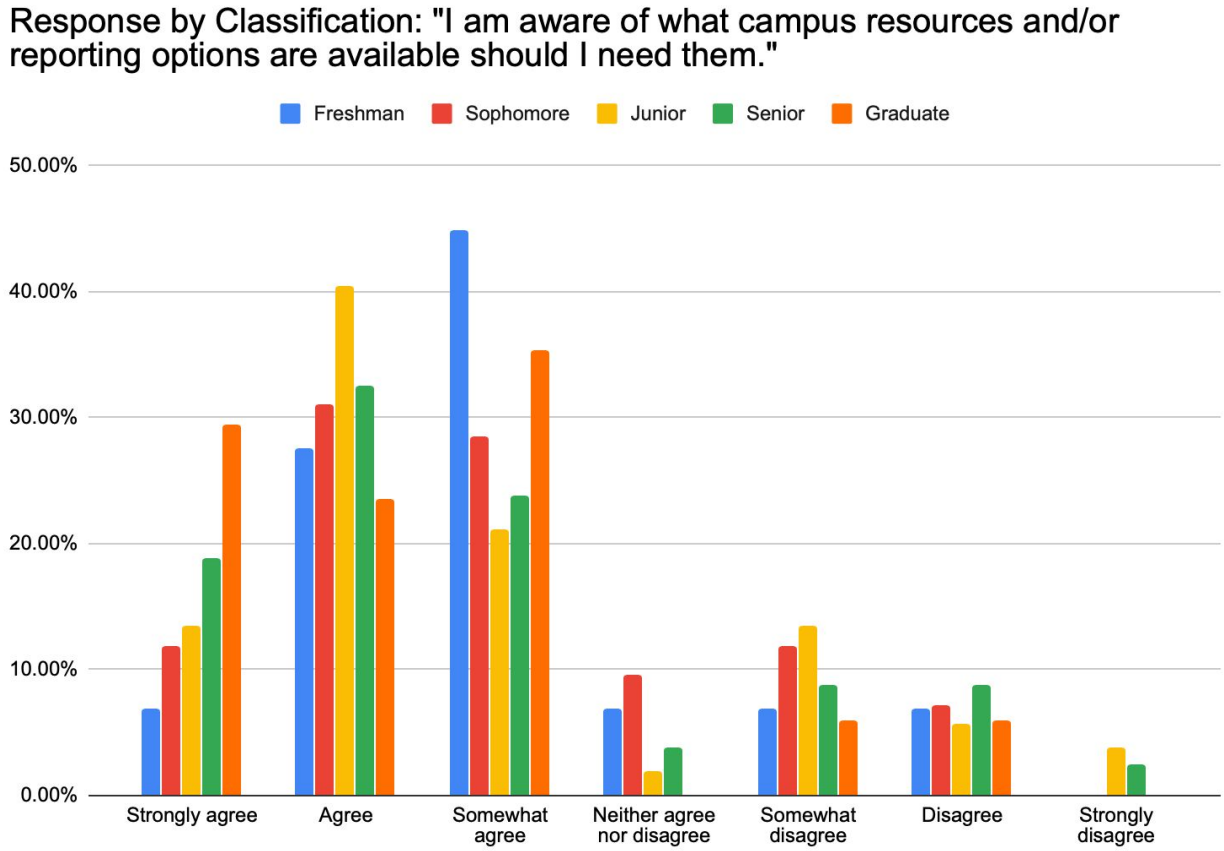
There were some discrepancies between men and women in terms of their awareness of campus resources. 81 percent of female participants indicated some degree of awareness of campus resources and/or reporting options, compared with 69 percent of male participants.

Figure 5. Awareness of Resources by Gender



While most students indicated that they at least somewhat agree with the item, when broken down by classification, we see that of those who indicated that they strongly agree that they have an awareness of campus resources and options, 6.9 percent were freshman, 11.9 percent sophomores, 13.46 percent juniors, and 18.75 percent seniors. When looking at agreement (defined here as 'strongly agree' and 'agree'), 34.4 percent of freshmen, 42.9 percent of sophomores, 53.86 percent of juniors, and 51.25 percent of seniors indicate an awareness of resources. Further, when honing in on those who indicated a strong knowledge of campus resources, we can see a clear upward trend emerging in the data as we look at classes from younger to older.

Figure 6. Percent Indicating Awareness of Resources by Classification



Consent Education

This section of the study is perhaps the most crucial to the thesis at-large, as our primary research focus is on consent and the subsequent culture that exists at the University of Texas as a consequence of students' knowledge or a lack thereof. It is broken up into two subsections: Consent Knowledge and Awareness (which focuses on what students know) and Consent Behaviors (which focuses on how students act with regards to consent). It must be noted that the items in this section are subject to social desirability bias because few people would admit to behaviors or a lack of knowledge that would allow them to be perceived negatively, especially not as sexual assailants (Ackerman, Beier, & Bowen, 2002).

The items below assess consent culture through the context of students' self-reported consent education-level, especially with regard to their boundaries, experiences, behaviors, attitudes, and perception of their peers' education-level. This section measured participants' responses using abbreviated versions of the scales developed by Humphreys & Herold (2007): 1) the Sexual Consent Attitudes Scale, which measures thoughts and feelings about consent and 2) the Sexual Consent Behaviors Scale. The Sexual Consent Attitudes Scale, which assesses students self-reported actions and conduct.

A. Consent Knowledge and Awareness

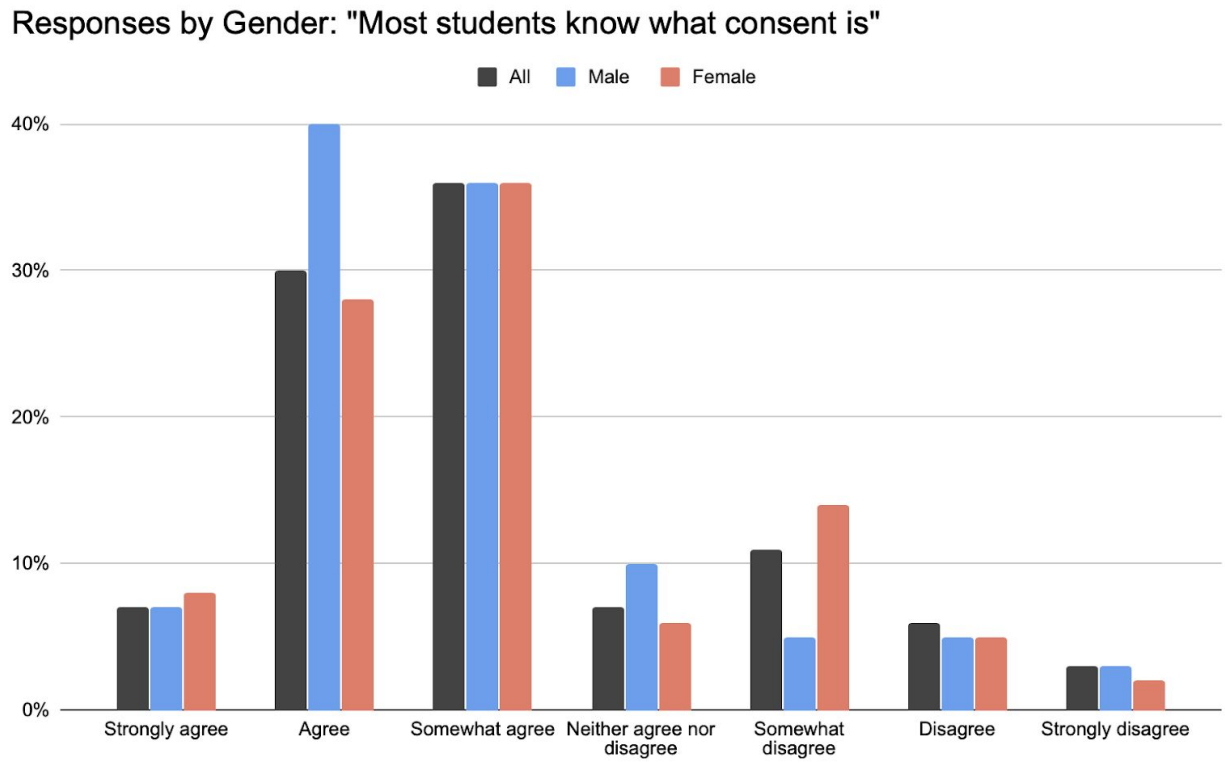
"I know what consent is." This item is likely highly influenced by social desirability bias, as 98 percent of all study participants indicated that they agree (20 percent) or strongly agree (78 percent) with the statement. A grand total of 0 participants indicated that they

disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. In order to accurately measure participants' actual knowledge beyond simply taking them for their word, students were asked to provide their own definitions of consent in the open-ended section.

There was not a real discrepancy between men and women in terms of self-reporting consent knowledge. Both men and women agreed or strongly agreed with the statement at a rate of 98 percent. When looking at only those who indicated a strong agreement, there was a slight discrepancy of 81 percent of female participants and 74 percent male participants. There was minimal difference in terms of classification. For those who agreed or strongly agreed, it was 100 percent of freshmen, 100 percent of sophomores, 96 percent of juniors, and 97.5 percent of seniors who indicated awareness of campus resources and/or reporting options. Both gender and classification had minimal differences in responses, thus graphs were not included for this item.

"Most students know what consent is." This item measured students' perceptions of their peers' knowledge about consent. This item paints perhaps a clearer picture of the consent culture at UT Austin because it lacks desirability bias and speaks to students' interactions and experiences with their peers. 37 percent of all participants indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement; 36 percent of all participants indicated that they somewhat agreed and 27 percent did not indicate agreement. Only 7 percent of students (7 percent male and 8 percent female) strongly agreed that their peers know what consent is. When looking at gender, men (47 percent) were more likely to indicate agreement (agree or strongly agree) that their peers know what consent is than women (36 percent). Figure 7 on the next page shows gender breakdown for students' perceptions about their peers.

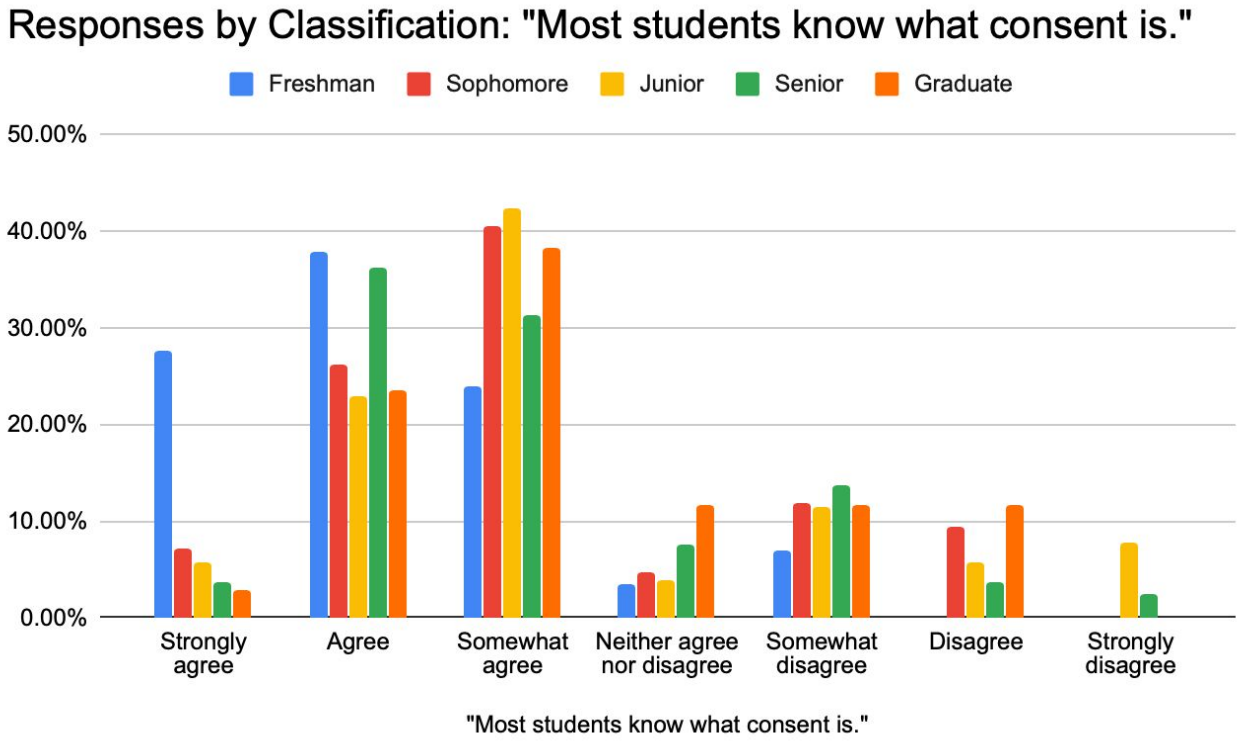
Figure 7. Perception of Peers' Consent Knowledge by Gender



The difference is even more stark when looking at this item through the lens of classification. 27.60 percent of freshmen strongly agree that "most students know what consent is," compared to 7.1 perent of sophomores, 5.7 percent of juniors, and 3.75 percent of seniors. In terms of general agreement (agree and strongly agree), 65.5 percent of freshmen indicated agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, in comparison to 33.3 percent of sophomores, 28.7 percent of juniors, and 40 percent of seniors. Further, only 6.9 percent of freshmen registered that they somewhat disagreed with the statement (and 0 percent of first-years strongly disagreed or disagreed); this is compared to 21.4 percent of sophomores, 24.9 percent of juniors,

and 20 percent of seniors who indicated disagreement (somewhat disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree) with the statement.

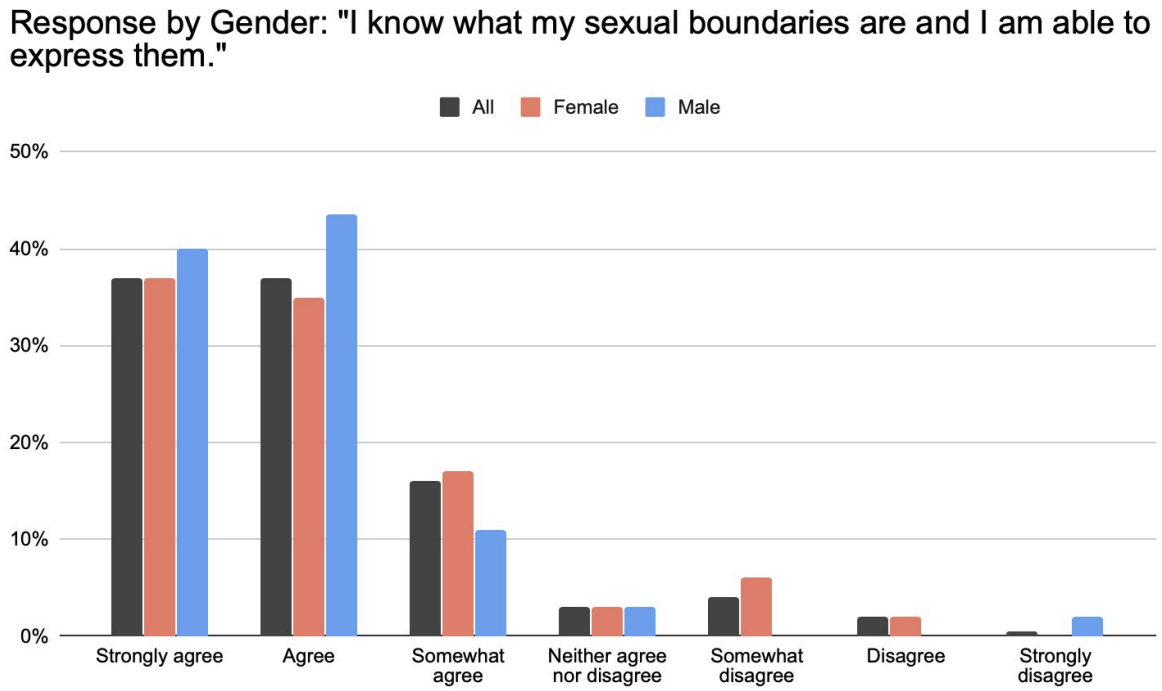
Figure 8. Students' Perceptions of their Peers' Consent Knowledge by Classification



"I know what my sexual boundaries are and I am able to express them." This item measured students' self-reported knowledge of their boundaries and their ability to express what those boundaries are, provided that they know them. Knowing one's boundaries and being able to express them is critical to being able to give consent and is thus a precursor for the ability to have consent behaviors at all. 74 percent of all respondents indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement in comparison to 6.5 percent of all participants who either

disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. When breaking this down by gender, we see that 72 percent of women and 83.5 percent of men indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Furthermore, 8 percent of women indicated some level of disagreement (somewhat disagree, disagree, strongly disagree), compared to 2 percent of male respondents.

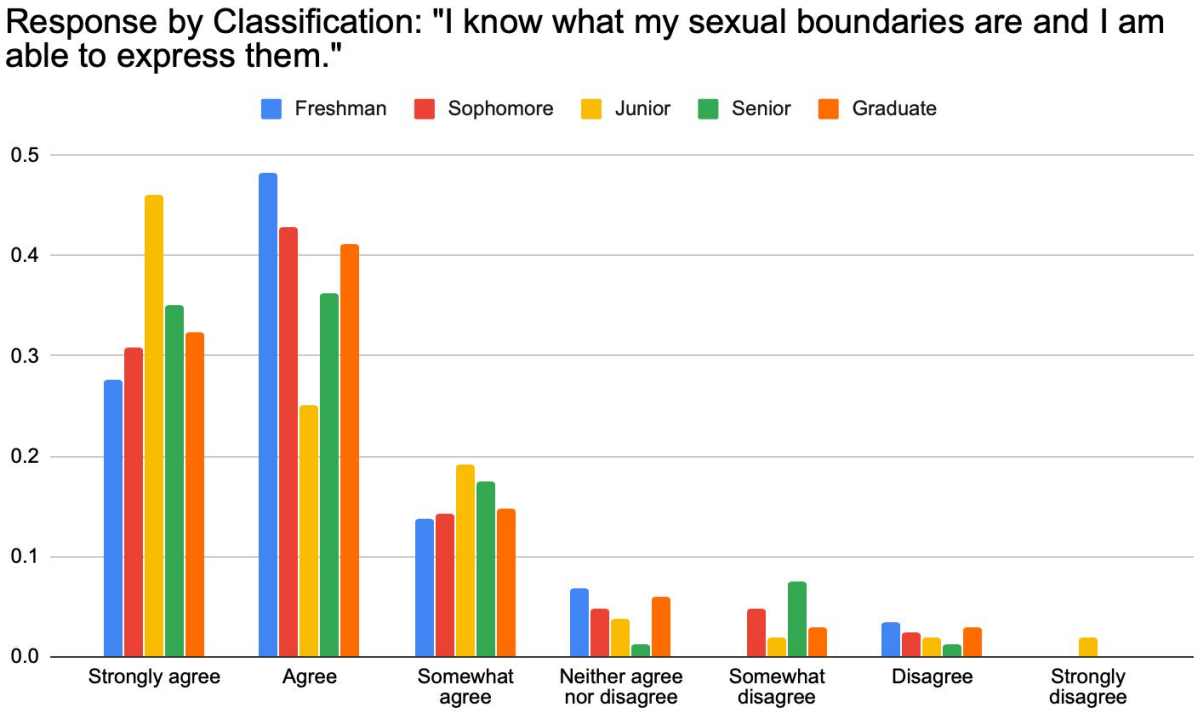
Figure 9. Awareness of Personal Sexual Boundaries by Gender



When breaking down the boundaries item by classification, some of the most striking data comes with the individual answers. For instance, 46.1 percent of juniors strongly agreed that they know what their boundaries are and that they are able to express them, compared to 35 percent of seniors, 30.9 percent of sophomores, and 27.6 percent of freshman. However, when

looking solely at those who indicated ‘agree,’ we find that 48.3 percent of freshman, 42.8 percent of sophomores, 36.25 percent of seniors, and 25 percent of juniors agreed.

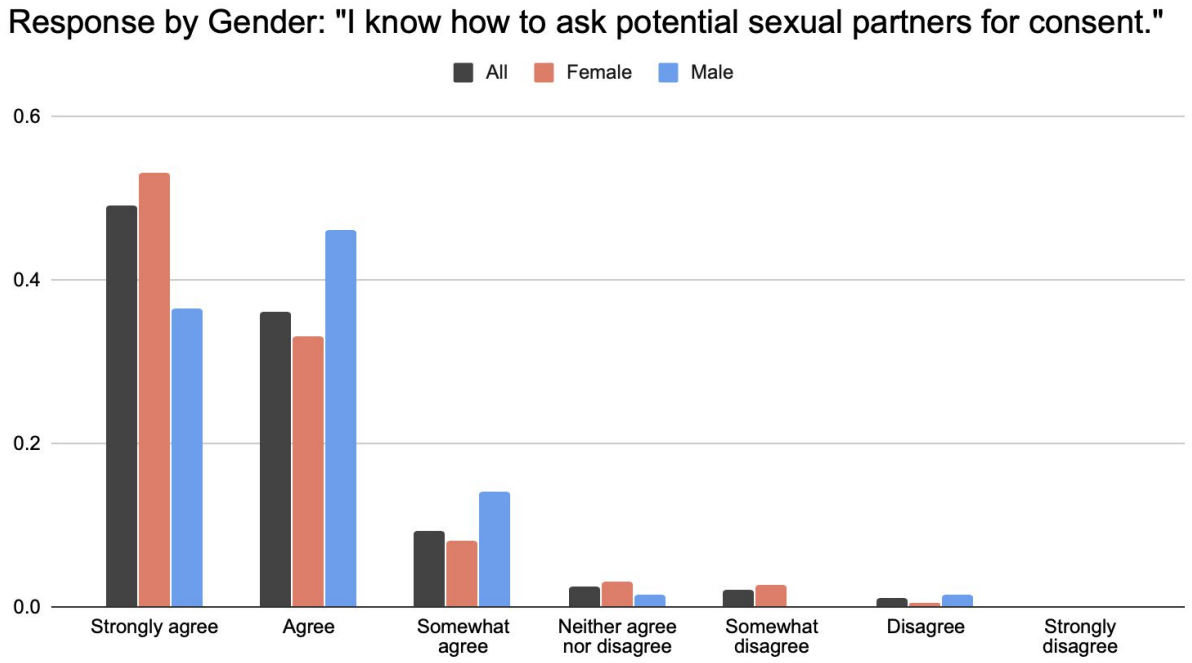
Figure 10. Awareness of Personal Sexual Boundaries by Classification



“I know how to ask potential partners for consent.” This item is placed in the Consent Knowledge and Awareness section rather than Consent Behaviors because the question asks about if the respondent *knows how* to ask partners for consent and does not specifically examine any behavioral factors, though there is thematic overlap. Of all respondents, 85 percent of students indicated agreement (49 percent said they strongly agreed, 36 percent indicated that they agreed) and only 3 percent indicated disagreeing (either somewhat disagree, disagree) and not one student indicated that they strongly agreed. 53 percent of female students compared to 35.5

percent of male students indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement, which is a statistically significant variation.

Figure 11. Percent Indicating Knowing How to Ask for Consent by Gender



When broken down by classification, we see that 96.5 percent of freshmen, 83.3 percent of sophomores, 79 percent of juniors, 88.75 percent of seniors, 82.4 percent of graduate students indicate knowing how to ask potential partners for consent (agreeing or strongly agreeing) with the statement. Furthermore, when specifically looking at strong agreement, we see that 41.3 percent of freshman, 52.4 percent of sophomores, 50 percent of juniors, 52.4 percent of seniors, and 41.2 percent of graduate students indicated confidence in knowing how to ask sexual partners for consent.

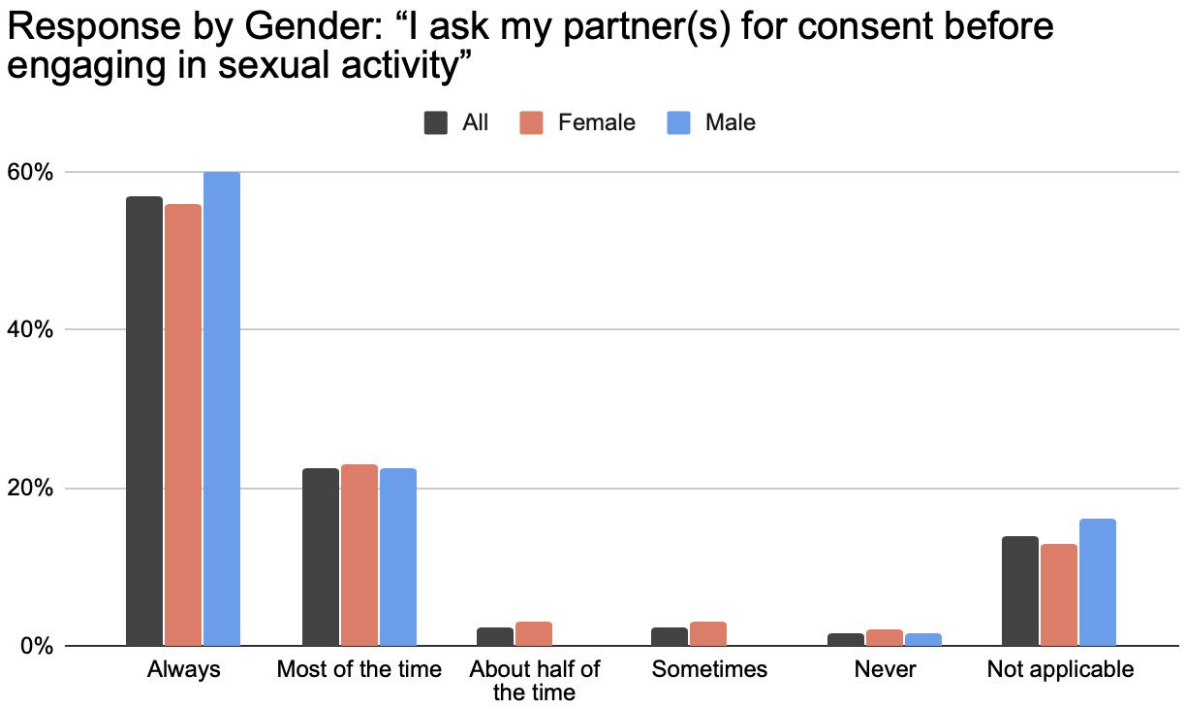
B. Consent Behaviors

This section assesses three items about students' behavior and conduct with regards to consent. However, the value in asking about behavior is to see whether or not the consent education exists in praxis. The items in this section measured consent behaviors using a 6-point Likert scale that measures the frequency (always, most of the time, about half the time, sometimes, never, and not applicable) that respondents indicated asking their sexual partners for consent. Two questions asked directly about the consent behaviors participants have in their sexual relationship with their partner(s), addressing their current consent practices; these items allowed for the option to indicate "not applicable" as a response as a way of getting an accurate reading of the data as well as being inclusive to students who are asexual, celibate, or not having sex for any other number of reasons. 14 percent of participants indicated "not applicable," meaning that 86 percent of students The data in this section will examine the total number of responses (including the "not applicables") as well as the data that focuses solely on those who are sexually active.

"I ask my partner(s) for consent before engaging in sexual activity." This item measured students' behaviors in regards to practicing consent in their lives. It provides a better understanding of consent culture more so than previous items (e.g. "I know what consent is" and "I know how to ask potential partners for consent") because it assesses self-reported behaviors. It is one thing to know *what* consent is or know *how* to ask, it is another thing entirely to act on it. 79.4 percent of participants indicated the regular practice of consent in their sex lives and frequently asking their partners for consent (57 percent said "always" and 22.4 percent said

"most of the time"). 14 percent of respondents indicated that this item is not applicable to them (e.g. not currently sexually active, asexual, celibate, etc.). To solely examine those who are sexually active, we subtract the percentage of "not applicable" responses from 1 and arrive at 86 percent as our new whole. Thus, out of the 86 percent of students who are having sex, 92.5 percent say they that they always ask for consent.

Figure 12. Personal Consent Behaviors by Gender

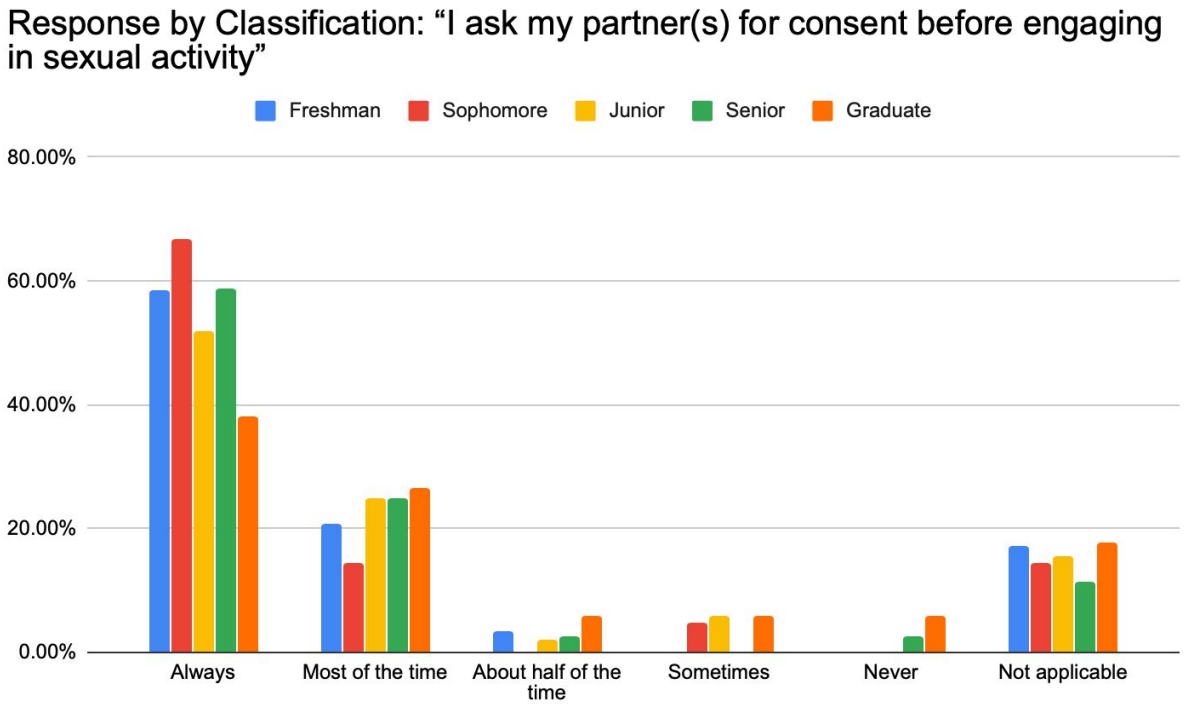


When observing the Personal Consent Behaviors item through the lens of gender, there is not a significant variation between the sexes: 82.5 percent of men and 79 percent of women indicated agreement (the sum of the always and most of the time values). There was essentially no statistical variation between males (22.5 percent) and females (23 percent) who agree with the

statement, however, men indicated that they strongly agree with the statement at a higher rate than women (60 percent as opposed to 56 percent). It is important to note that "not applicable" was included as a response option (13 percent for females, 16 percent for males), meaning that the data above is slightly skewed and includes people who do not practice sexual behavior in an item that measures a specific kind of sexual behavior. When we readjust the values (making 86 percent the new variable for *n*) and examine only the students who indicated being sexually active and thus have the opportunity to practice consent with their partners, we see that 92.7 percent of men and 89.2 percent of women indicated a high frequency (e.g. "always" and "most of the time").

For classification, a majority of respondents in each year said that they always ask their partners for consent to sexual activity (58.6 percent of freshmen, 66.6 percent of sophomores, 51.9 percent of juniors, 58.75 percent of seniors, and 38.2 percent of graduate students). Furthermore, 20.7 percent of freshmen, 14.28 percent of sophomores, 25 percent of juniors, and 25 percent of seniors ask their partners for consent most of the time. When combining "always" and "most of the time" responses, we get 79.3 percent of freshman, 80.94 percent of sophomores, 83.75 percent of seniors, and 64.6 percent of graduate students who indicate a high frequency of practicing consent. The aforementioned data included non-sexually active participants, so the percentages of students by classification who are always or most of the time asking for consent when they engage in sex. For whom this question was "applicable," 89.1 percent of sexually active freshmen ask their partners for consent most of the time, 90.9 percent of sophomores, 86.4 percent of juniors, 94.1 percent of seniors, and 72.6 percent of graduate students.

Figure 13. Personal Consent Behaviors by Classification

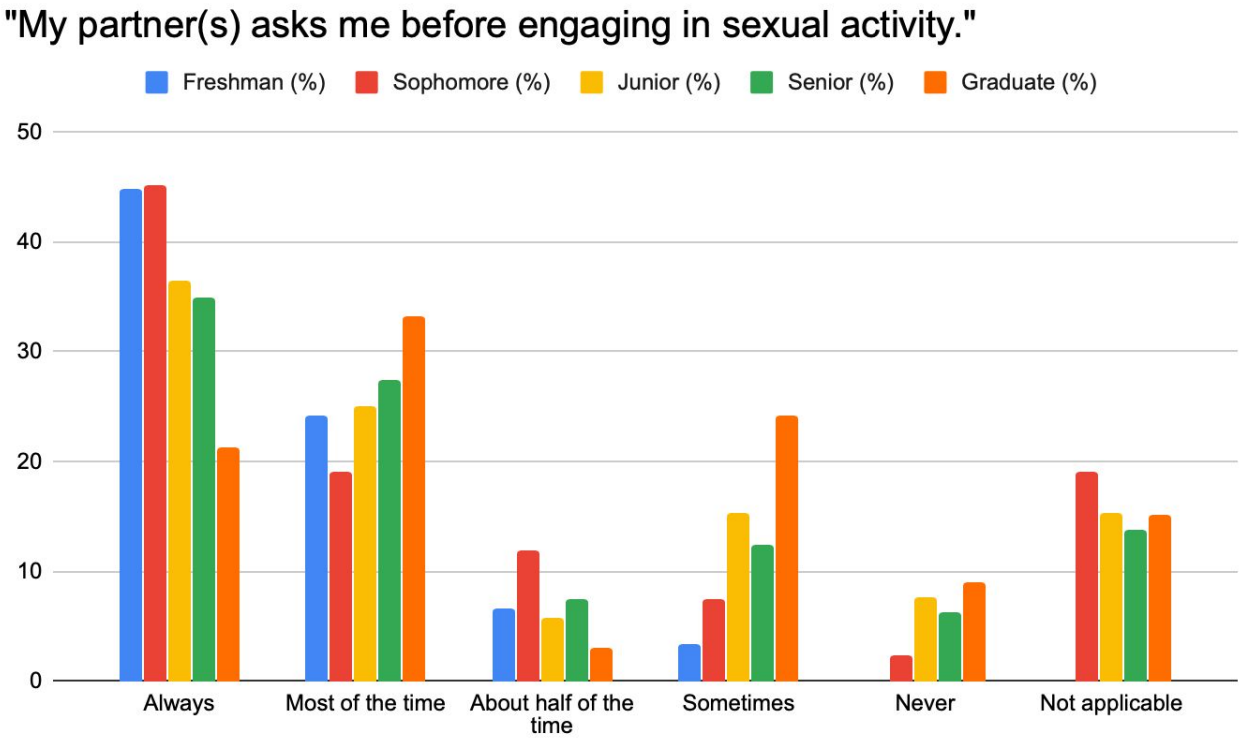


"My partner(s) asks me before engaging in sexual activity"

This is a different way of ascertaining the same information about the frequency at which consensual sex is happening between sexual partners, It is essentially the same question as the previous one, yet is able to yield more pointed results with less chance for social desirability biases because it is a disclosure about a peer's behavior rather than one's own. 37 percent of all participants indicated that their partner always asks for consent, 25 percent said most of the time, 7 percent said about half the time, and 12 percent said sometimes. 4.7 percent of participants indicated that their partner never asks them for consent. When the high frequencies (always and most of the time) are combined, the difference between men and women on this item is effectively nonexistent: 62 percent of men and women's partners ask the participant for their

consent almost every time they have sex. The most significant statistic from the classification data on this point is that only 21.2 percent of graduate students' partners always ask them for consent (as opposed to 44.8 percent for freshman, 45.2 percent for sophomores, 36.5 percent for juniors and 35 percent for seniors). This is a substantial variance. Furthermore, 9 percent of graduate students say that they never are asked by their partners for their consent—this in comparison to 7.7 percent of juniors, 6.25 percent of seniors, 2.3 percent of sophomores, and 0 freshmen, which are substantially large gaps in context.

Figure 14. Partner Consent Behaviors by Classification



"How often do you think about consent?"

This item used a 4-point Likert frequency scale to measure how often students indicate thinking about consent. The purpose of this question was to get another gauge of the frequency that consent comes up for students and also to see the degree to which conversations about consent are a part of the collective consciousness of UT. By gender, there was not a statistically significant variance.

Table 3. Frequency of Thoughts About Consent by Gender

How often do you think about consent?	All (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)
Always	35	35	33.33
Most of the time	39	38.4	36
Sometimes	21	22	17.4
Never	5	4.5	6.3

Table 4. Frequency of Thoughts About Consent by Classification

How often do you think about consent?	Freshman (%)	Sophomore (%)	Junior (%)	Senior (%)	Graduate (%)
Always	34.5	38	40.38	36.25	26.4
Often	44.8	35.7	38.46	38.75	32.3
Sometimes	17.2	21.4	17.3	18.75	35.2
Never	3.44	4.8	3.8	6.25	5.8

Analysis of Open-Ended Responses

There were two free-response questions and the responses were assessed quantitatively and quantitatively. For the item, "To me, consent is defined as…" which asked students to

provide their own definitions of consent as a means of gauging their knowledge of the subject, I came up with two methods for quantitative analysis of this qualitative data: 1) Utilizing a word cloud and 2) Devising a method for scoring the responses (1-5) based on how close student responses were to the actual definition of consent. Responses that addressed all pieces of consent and were wholly accurate were given 5's, responses that addressed most of the pieces of consent were given 4's, responses that addressed some but left out critical aspects were given 3's, and responses that and incorrect definitions were given 1's.

The last item asked students to list any final thoughts, comments, and concerns that they wanted to share with the researchers. There were a total of 38 responses to this question and thematic analysis was used to assess the data. The rankings were averaged together to reach the score for the University.

"To me, consent is defined as…" For the most part, students seemed to have a fairly decent grasp on the concept of consent; however, while 99.2 percent of students indicated in an earlier question that they "know what consent is," not every definition students provided is perfect and 67 participants left the response blank. Most students' definitions did not cover every aspect of consent, but on the whole, the data shows that students have a fair understanding of what consent entails and what it should look like. Eighty-six responses included the word "yes" and seventy-five responses used the words "enthusiastic" or "enthusiasm" to describe consent. Thirty-two responses noted that consent is "verbal" and twenty-six definitions used the word "clear." However, only six responses included the word "conscious," only four definitions included "sober," only five included "ongoing." In order to represent this data response visually,

the responses were uploaded into word cloud generating software. A word cloud is a visual representation of text data where the size of the words indicate a word's frequency; the larger a word appears, the greater the word's frequency in the data set.

Figure 15. Word Cloud

The word cloud is helpful because it allows us to ascertain that at least on a basic level, students collectively have a conceptual understanding of consent. It provides information about the big-picture, but does not assess the quality of individual responses or assess the level of individual knowledge. In order to look at the quality of the responses and measure the level of student understanding, the responses were scored (1-5) based on the comprehensiveness of the definition they provided, using the *Actual Consent Knowledge* subscale that delineates the four

main thematic dimensions of consent: clarity, voluntary, ongoing, and agreement. To score a 5, a definition would have to speak to all four dimensions. Scores of 4 were awarded to those that addressed three dimensions; 3's were awarded to definitions that addressed two aspects of consent; 2's were awarded to definitions that spoke to only one dimension; 1's were assigned to those that did not speak to any of these components or were blatantly incorrect or off-topic.

There were 184 responses to this open-ended question. Of these, zero respondents scored a perfect 5. Only one student was able to address all four dimensions of the widely-accepted definition of consent. There were nineteen students who scored a 4, 74 respondents were awarded a 3, 79 students were awarded 2's, and 12 students were awarded 1's for responses that were entirely incorrect. Even though the majority of respondents scored 2's and 3's, it should be noted that many of these definitions were well-thought-out, but scored lower as a result of the scale, which is not entirely free from subjectivity. However, it must be emphasized that only 6.5 percent of respondents scored 1s, getting the definition wrong or missing the point entirely, which in turn means that 93.5 percent of survey respondents have at least some basic understanding of consent. Furthermore, 42.9 percent of respondents touched on one element of consent (2s), 40.2 percent discussed two aspects (3s), 9.2 percent were only missing one element (4s), and .5% (1 response) touched on all four elements.

Any other thoughts, comments, or concerns you would like to share? (Thematic Analysis)

There were 38 total responses to this question and they have been assessed using a thematic analysis. The complete list of responses can be found in Appendix C. Key themes that

emerged in the responses (with some overlap) were a negative perception of UT (10 responses), survivors disclosing their experiences, the need for more in-depth and nuanced consent education, survivors' disclosure of experiences, and suggestions made by students to improve resources, systems, and processes.

Of the ten responses that fall into the negative perception of UT category, students cited issues with Title IX and the reporting process, with one response saying, "As someone who has gone through the reporting process at UT, it took so long and was so painful that I wish I never had to report it. The guy was never even held responsible by the university. It wasn't worth how difficult it was." One student also indicated feeling unsafe on campus as a result of "the UT handles sexual assault." In a response, one student put it more bluntly, "UT sucks at confronting sexual assault."

Many responses fell into a large theme of a need for increased, comprehensive, better-tailored consent education. According to suggestions from an aggregate of the responses in this theme, future consent education programming that is implemented on campus should: emphasize that consent is ongoing, continuous, and revocable; help students to identify and express their boundaries; help students with their communication for when boundary violations occur; help students with making the consent conversation less "awkward;" discuss the importance of protection (e.g. condoms) as a part of sexual consent; address students perceptions about why consent gets "muddled" or other myths about consent they may hold (e.g. believing that involving alcohol blurs boundaries; consent is awkward; or that consent is not needed for long-term relationships).

There were four survivors who identified themselves as such. They spoke directly to the frustrations that they have had with UT, such as a lack of accountability for perpetrators, the institutional response. Institutional response, lack of accountability for perpetrators, and Title IX. One participant, in describing her Title IX process said, “I was sexually assaulted and UT is useless at this. They had to tell my abuser that I reported him like... can you not?” Another survivor, in describing the way UT deals with sexual assault said, “I’ve been sexually assaulted and the way UT handles sexual assault has made me feel personally unsafe on campus.”

There were five suggestions for improvement, among these, two responses asked for the University to hire another Advocate. Another response suggested displaying reporting resources more prominently around campus and another student suggested that Title IX rules and regulations be more clear.

Discussion

While rape culture has been heavily studied, there is been a lack of research about consent culture, especially quantitative data. This study aimed to fill that gap and provide quantitative data on consent culture, specifically with regards to consent behaviors, attitudes, campus climate surrounding sexual assault. This section answers the study's guiding research questions:

1. What is the level of students' understanding about consent?
2. What are students' perceptions of sexual assault on campus and the institutional response to the issue?
3. What are the implications of the answers to the prior questions for a consent culture?

The first key takeaway about the campus climate data were that the vast majority of student participants (87.5 percent) generally agree that sexual assault is a problem on campus. From the 2017 CLASE data on prevalance, we know for a fact that sexual violence is prevalent (Busch-Armendariz et al., 2017). If students had indicated mostly disagreement with the statement, we would be much worse off in terms of addressing violence on campus—teaching prevention to those who think it sexual assault is a problem is far easier than teaching the woefully ignorant. At the very least, there is a perception and widespread awareness of the issue, at least among study participants. This is important because the first step in solving a problem is being aware of it and this statistic implies that this issue may be on the minds of many.

However, this statistic rules out the possibility of the presence of a fully-fledged, thriving consent culture right off the bat, which is no surprise. Any environment where sexual violence is an endemic problem is an environment that lacks a culture of consent, but that does not mean

that such a culture cannot be built. On the other side of this coin, in order for a consent culture to exist on campus, the harm previously caused by sexual violence must be widely recognized, which this survey item data indicates is the case for the participants.

The second major campus climate takeaway was that students may not believe the University takes sexual assault seriously enough. 26.5 percent of students indicated that they agree or strongly agree with the statement, "The University of Texas at Austin takes sexual assault seriously." What is most interesting about the data here is that while a majority of students (53.5 percent) indicate agreement to with the statement to some degree (somewhat, agree, and strongly), only 5.3 percent of participants indicated that they believe that UT takes the issue seriously, as opposed to 27 percent of respondents who said that they think that UT takes the issue somewhat seriously. Reflecting the aforementioned data, a large percentage (45.9) of responses indicated at least a degree of disagreement with the statement.

Consider again the previous item. When looking at the difference between students' perceptions of the institutional response to campus sexual assault and their perceptions of the scope of the problem, it stands to reason that if a University is adequately responding, then student perceptions would reflect that. If a problem exists on campus (which it does), then the issue must be taken seriously. If the University was taking sexual violence as seriously as it should be, it would be reflected in the students' perceptions of the institution's response. However, this data from the survey is not indicative of this. About 3 times as many students think that sexual assault is a problem at the University than those who think UT takes the issue seriously. This should raise a red-flag for the University, as perceptions of an institution are at the core of campus climate and inform what the culture looks like.

In the open-ended responses, a "negative perception of UT" was by far the most common theme—accounting for ten out of thirty-eight open-ended responses (26.3 percent). The qualitative data from the written responses from students who identified themselves as survivors illustrate their perceptions of the institutional response as well as the harm that can be caused from inadequate responses. One expressed regret at reporting their assault because of the painful process, "As someone who has gone through the reporting process at UT, it took so long and was so painful that I wish I never had to report it. The guy was never even held responsible by the university. It wasn't worth how difficult it was." Another disclosed, "I've been sexually assaulted and the way UT handles sexual assault has made me feel personally unsafe on campus." Another said, "I was sexually assaulted and UT is useless at this. They had to tell my abuser that I reported him like... can you not?"

The student perception to the institutional response can perhaps be summed up best by this very blunt and to-the-point response, "UT sucks at confronting sexual assault" and another student said, "Just because the university takes sexual assault seriously does not mean their actions have matched their commitment."

To give UT the benefit of the doubt and assume the University does in fact take sexual assault seriously behind the scenes—which multiple points of evidence (A. Kang, personal communication, 2020; open-ended responses, and the present item) point to the contrary—the fact that it has failed to convey the seriousness of its response is alone emblematic of an institutional failing. The message sent to students is one of a lack of care and concern for their safety and well-being, which all play into the campus climate. If students receive messaging,

even unintentionally and inadvertently, from the University that their trauma does not matter, then a consent culture is not possible.

The last piece of campus climate is an awareness of resources and reporting options. One litmus test of an institution's culture is: does the university offer resources for survivors? Chapter III did a deep-dive into the many robust programs UT offers, but the issue with having so many programs is that it is simply a lot to keep track of. I assert that it is for this reason that many students indicated "somewhat agree" over "strongly agree" on the item that measured resource awareness. There are so many services offered that students may not even know which ones they don't know about. Seniors were nearly three times more likely than freshmen to strongly agree that they have an awareness of resources and options, which may be indicative of students gaining more general knowledge about campus the longer they spend at the University, but students of all ages need to have a strong understanding. Having exemplary prevention and response programs is a huge point in UT's favor, but in order for these programs to be remotely effective, students need to know they exist. The next chapter will dive into the solutions for this quandary the University faces.

The second component of measuring consent culture on campus is of course measuring the level of understanding that students have of consent. To an extent, there is a great deal of knowledge among participants about consent and as a matter of fact, students who responded to the survey overwhelmingly have a solid framework for understanding consent. However, it must be mentioned that the participants who would voluntarily take a survey about consent are more likely to be the kinds of students who have a general knowledge of consent. This personal consent knowledge litem is perhaps the most prone to social desirability bias. If a participant

does not know what consent is, they are not likely to admit it. Moreover, participants may think that they know what consent is when, in reality, they do not. This bias is further evidenced by the fact that. Knowing how to ask for consent is a critical piece of education, the building block for all other consent behaviors, and the first step in ensuring that a consent culture can exist.

Much of the survey data was subject to social desirability bias, as students self-reported astronomically high-rates of their personal understanding of consent, but a thematic analysis and ranking of their open-ended answers was able to delineate their actual level of knowledge. Once scores were assigned to every definition, I took the average of the data set and found that 2.5355 is the average rank for the sample. This means that on average, survey participants do have a widespread, basic conceptual understanding, but from what this study shows, the knowledge students have is not very comprehensive or nuanced.

This study has shown that while a consent culture does not yet currently exist at UT, the groundwork (baseline consent knowledge, acknowledgment that sexual assault is a probem, some degree of resource awareness, majority of students practicing consent, etc.) has already been laid. These factors are some of the seeds of a culture of consent, but if the University of Texas wants to build this culture, it must begin to start taking this issue seriously and work to create serious changes that center survivors. The results of this study demonstrate that while a majority of students who participated in the survey have developed an understanding of consent and recognize that sexual violence is a problem, there is still a long way to go. A majority

Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study was not without several limitations. A chief limitation of this study is the nature of surveys themselves, because of the opportunity provided for social desirability bias. Some participants may have answered questions dishonestly or misrepresented themselves because of social pressure to say the "right" thing. Another form of possible bias: students who take the time to voluntarily participate in a survey about sexual assault and consent are likely to be people who care about the issue more than others and are thus more drawn to participating. Such response bias was mitigated by distributing the survey as widely as possible and by ensuring and making clear the anonymity of participants.

Furthermore, surveys themselves provide yet another limitation as a direct result of their oversimplification and lack of nuance and context. Surveys are 2-dimensional pictures of 3-dimensional subjects and perhaps their most limiting factor is that they only offer information from one moment in time. In an ideal world, the Sexual Assault and Consent at UT Austin Survey would have been designed longitudinally, conducted for the first time four years ago and then later re-conducted with the same group of participants to gain an understanding of whether or not their perceptions and beliefs were changing and to analyze cause-effect data. Because this was a one-time survey, all of the data examined correlation rather than causation, and causal data would be valuable to future research.

Another limitation of the survey was its length. In order to encourage participation and respect the time of students, the survey only measured ten items. Future research should develop a measure of the Consent Culture Scale that goes more in-depth into each of the topics covered. Every item measured could have multiple sub-items that measure specific behaviors and attitudes more closely. For example, when assessing "most students know what consent is," it could be

useful to specifically ask students if they have conversations about consent with their peers. Or when assessing if students feel that "The University of Texas at Austin takes sexual assault seriously," getting more specific and asking if they believed UT would take a *report* of sexual violence seriously.

In a similar vein, it should be noted that the responses to the open-ended item, *"To me, consent is defined as…"* may not be fully demonstrative of students' knowledge, as shorter answers could possibly be indicative of students' impatience and eagerness to finish taking an online survey, rather than a lack of knowledge.

This survey was by no means exhaustive and this sample was not representative of the population of the University of Texas. While we were pleased to have 246 responses on an undergraduate research project, for a school with over 51,000 students, 246 barely scratches the surface and hopefully future research on the subject reaches thousands more. However, the value of the survey is that it provides a glimpse into the minds of some University of Texas students and provides a snapshot of the campus climate as it relates to the current culture of sexual assault and consent.

Demographic information in this survey was restricted to gender and school classification, which ended up being a limitation because it left out important factors of sexual orientation or race and ethnicity, which prior research (Cobian & Stolzenberg, 2018) indicates contribute to different experiences and the understanding of prevalence as it relates to different populations. Similarly, there were only 9 transgender, genderqueer, or gender-nonconforming-identified participants, which is a gap in this study and future research on

the subject should seek to increase the number of TGQN participants so as to ascertain correct data about their experience of the campus climate and culture.

The final limitation is that these findings were initially going to include supplemental interviews with students who indicated via email that they wished to speak more in-depth about the subject matter. Many students responded to the initial survey email and indicated that they wished to speak more in-depth about the subject matter. Unfortunately, due to the spread of SARS-CoV-2, those interviews were canceled. While they were not entirely necessary to gain an understanding of the campus climate, empirical evidence in the form of interviews would have been a valuable supplement.

V. CONCLUSION: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Despite robust prevention efforts on campus, sexual assault remains a harmful and pervasive problem at The University of Texas at Austin. The results of the present study demonstrate that students have a relatively solid understanding of consent and recognize that sexual violence is a problem. While this is a huge step in the right direction, it is only a start. Building a consent culture takes time and though we are certainly not there yet, the seeds of such a culture have been planted. However, they can only grow to blossom if extensive action is taken by the University to dramatically increase efforts to prevent interpersonal violence and support survivors. In this final chapter, I have compiled a list of recommendations that would have resounding effects for the campus climate and culture. Ending rape on campus will not happen overnight—decades of work have already been done—but only through swift action, the massive restructuring of programs and a transformation in the University's priorities could its elimination even be possible. The University of Texas at Austin must take a firmer stand against sexual violence, make student safety its top priority, and not just pay lip-service to the issue.

Of the utmost importance is the need to consolidate and expand campus resources and prevention programming into one large department: The Office of Support, Prevention, and Advocacy (colloquially called "the SPA"). As explored in Chapter III, there are a multitude of excellent resources offered, but because there are so many different programs, with different websites and different offices, it can be hard for students to navigate or even be aware of what is actually offered among the alphabet soup (e.g. VAV, IVPS, SES, TFD, SSD, etc.). Having all of the resources and programs in one space will streamline the process of students getting

connected to exactly what they need, will increase awareness and visibility of all programs, and will increase the utilization of services.

The University recently committed to implementing recommendations from Husch Blackwell, LLP following the protests against sexual misconduct, among these recommendations is the creation of a new department that will consolidate confidential resources (Fenves, 2020). I would urge the University to be intentional about how this process is conducted, consult with students and listen to their feedback, and defer to the lead of the staff members who are already working in these roles. To effectively implement a program of this magnitude, the voices of those who are impacted the most should be front-and-center. I would further urge the University to consolidate prevention programming in this new office along with the confidential resources. Prevention and support go hand in hand, as the work on either side informs the other.

The programs housed in this office would include Voices Against Violence (both prevention and response), the Advocates, Interpersonal Violence Peer Support, the Title IX Prevention Coordinator (though this would be the department's only direct affiliation with the Title IX Office), and the students organizations that comprise the Interpersonal Violence Prevention Coalition. Furthermore, additional staff must be hired, such as more confidential Advocates, additional VAV counselors to allow for longer-term counseling services and more identity-focused care, a BeVocal Interpersonal Violence Specialist to focus on bystander intervention practices specifically tailored to this issue, and a designated IVPS program coordinator (who does not also have to work as the University's sole Advocate). The number of VAV Prevention and Outreach specialists should also be increased to increase the number of

students that are able to reach and the amount of educational dosing that can be given to different groups over a certain period of time (DeGue et al., 2014).

Upon the creation of the Office of Support, Prevention, and Advocacy and the subsequent expansion of existing prevention programming to have the capacity to cater to more students, consent education on campus has the potential to be completely transformed. The first order of business would be mandating all 176 sponsored student organizations to attend or host a VAV workshop annually in order to maintain their university-sanctioned status ("Sponsored Student Organizations," 2020). Starting with sponsored students organizations as opposed to registered student organizations is sensible because 1) there are fewer of them and 2) they are tethered to the University, which means that mandating programming is much more feasible.

The University has also committed to implementing a restorative justice program as a result of the Husch Blackwell recommendations (Fenves, 2020), and once this program is implemented, consent education should be a prominent feature of the program as it provides an exceptional opportunity to educate those who need it the most and prevent future harm from happening to others.

This department would exist as its own entity under the Student Affairs umbrella, but would not be housed under the Office of the Dean of Students or the Title IX Office, as these departments can feel inaccessible, alienating, and may create additional barriers for those seeking support. Creating a department of this scale, composed of so many programs originating from varying departments, would be unprecedented in UT's history of confronting interpersonal violence, but luckily there are models of such a program that we can look to for reference.

Rutgers University in New Jersey has a comprehensive department called the "Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance" (VPVA) which offers services such as counseling, advocacy, crisis intervention, a coalition of violence prevention student organizations, a peer support program, an interactive theatre program, a men's engagement program, ("Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance," 2020; Bucholz, 2015). Rutgers is an excellent model for UT, as both schools are large, public research institutions and their state's flagship university.

The University should commit to fully funding violence prevention and survivor support efforts indefinitely. The VPVA program at Rutgers, which is similar in size and scope to what I am proposing here, has an operating budget of $2.5 million annually ("Rutgers…," 2019). This may sound like a hefty price tag, but considering the University of Texas has the second largest endowment in the country with a whopping $30.9 billion (Najmabadi, 2018), it stands to reason that UT could shell out a little extra cash to prevent its students from get assaulted and provide survivors with services to assist in their healing. If keeping students safe is not reason enough, the University could consider funding prevention programming to be an investment. According to CLASE (2017) data, 9 percent of students who experienced victimization at the University of Texas were forced to take time off school as a result and 5 percent of victims had to drop one or more classes (Busch-Armendariz et al., 2017). Therefore, the University should do everything in its power to ensure that students are not traumatized on campus, if only to increase the graduation rate.

In a similar vein, the final recommendation for building a culture of consent is to make academic classes survivor-centered. All educators work with students who have experienced trauma, and statistically speaking, it would be unlikely for any professor at the University to have never had a survivor in their classes (Banyard & Cantor, 2004; Busch-Armendariz, 2017). Trauma poses unique challenges to survivors and can hinder a student's academic success; educators can either play a role in causing harm or aiding healing (Banyard & Cantor, 2004). All professors at the University of Texas should be required to attend trauma-informed professional development to ensure that their pedagogy is supportive to the student survivors in their classes. For example, professors should include campus resources on their syllabi and let students know days in advance if they will be covering material that would be activating (e.g. showing content that features a rape scene, etc.). This allows for blanket recognition of survivors in their classes and takes the onice off of survivors who would no longer feel the need to explain their situation to a mandatory reporter in order to explain why they left the room in the middle of class.

The University of Texas must become a trauma-sensitive school, one in which addressing the impact of trauma on students' learning is at the heart of its mission and where all students feel safe, welcomed, and supported (Cole, Eisner, Gregory, & Ristuccia, 2013). A culture of consent entails survivor-centered, trauma-informed practices and spaces which care about survivors and recognize the harm that has already been done to them and aims to lift some of the burden off their shoulders.

Rape culture is deeply ingrained in our society and consent education is the most effective way to combat it (Iverson & Issadore, 2018). If tonight every rapist magically

developed respect for the bodily autonomy of others, healthy communication skills, a positive relationship with masculinity (for men), and relinquished their desire for power, control, and domination, then tomorrow, there would be no more rape. Unfortunately, cultural shifts do not occur overnight, which means that education, prevention, and intervention strategies are necessary and even if rape were eradicated by tomorrow morning, work would still need to be done to support the masses of survivors who have already had harm done to them.

Our study findings showed that students think sexual violence is a problem, but that they do not think the University takes it seriously. The study also showed that a majority of student respondents have some degree of understanding about consent and practice it in their daily lives. These findings allow us to conclude that while there is not a fully-fledged, flourishing consent culture at this point in time, a culture of consent is in its budding stages, as a result of decades-long work done by staff and students alike. Building a consent culture takes time and while we are not there yet, the seeds of such a culture have been planted. However, they can only blossom if action is taken by the University to dramatically increase efforts to prevent violence, support survivors, and ensure that every member of the community is valued. At all levels, from changing individual behaviors to changing policy, consent must be normalized and at the forefront of our collective consciousness, as it is the only way to create a consent culture.

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Appendix A. Survey Data

Demographic Information:

Total participants: 246

Gender	Percentage (%	n
Female	72.00	178
Male	25.00	62
TGQN	3.00%	9

Classification	Percentage (%)	n
Freshman	11.80	29
Sophomore	17	42
Junior	21.10	52
Senior	32.50	80
Graduate	13.80	42
Staff/Faculty	3.70%	9

Responses by Gender:

"Sexual assault is a problem at The University of Texas at Austin."	All (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	TGQN (%)
Strongly agree	28.2	28.8	20.9	78
Agree	35.1	36.7	32.2	22
Somewhat agree	21.2	22	20.9	0
Neither agree nor disagree	8.9	7.9	12.9	0
Somewhat disagree	2.4	0.56	8	0
Disagree	3.3	2.8	4.8	0
Strongly disagree	0.4	0.56	0	0

"The University of Texas at Austin takes sexual assault seriously."	All (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	TGQN (%)
Strongly agree	5.30	4.5	8	0
Agree	21.20	21	24	0
Somewhat agree	27	31	16	22.0
Neither agree nor disagree	8.1	8	10.00	11
Somewhat disagree	19.5	17	27	11
Disagree	13.4	13	13	33
Strongly disagree	4.9	5	2	22

"I am aware of what campus resources and/or reporting options are available should I need them."	All (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	TGQN (%)
Strongly agree	18	19	13	33
Agree	32	31	37	11
Somewhat agree	28	31	19	22
Neither agree nor disagree	4	2	10	11
Somewhat disagree	9	10	8	22
Disagree	7	6	10	0
Strongly disagree	2	1	3	0

"I know what consent is."	All (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	TGQN (%)
Strongly agree	78	81	74	66
Agree	20	17	24	22
Somewhat agree	1	0.5	2	11
Neither agree nor disagree	0.4	0.5	0	0
Somewhat disagree	0.4	0.5	0	0
Disagree	0	0	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0

"Most students know what consent is."	All (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	TGQN (%)
Strongly agree	7	8	7	0
Agree	30	28	40	11
Somewhat agree	36	36	36	44
Neither agree nor disagree	7	6	10	0
Somewhat disagree	11	14	5	0
Disagree	6	5	5	33
Strongly disagree	3	2	3	11

"I know what my sexual boundaries are and I am able to express them."	All (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	TGQN (%)
Strongly agree	37	37	40	0
Agree	37	35	43.5	22
Somewhat agree	16	17	11	33
Neither agree nor disagree	3	3	3	22
Somewhat disagree	4	6	0	0
Disagree	2	2	0	11
Strongly disagree	0.5	0	2	11

"I know how to ask potential sexual partners for consent."	All (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	TGQN (%)
Strongly agree	49	53	36.5	55
Agree	36	33	46	22
Somewhat agree	9.27	8	14	0
Neither agree nor disagree	2.4	3	1.5	11
Somewhat disagree	2	3	0	0
Disagree	1	0.5	1.5	11
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0

“I ask my partner(s) for consent before engaging in sexual activity”	All (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	TGQN (%)
Always	57	56	60	55
Most of the time	22.4	23	22.5	11
About half of the time	2.4	3	0	0
Sometimes	2.4	3	0	0
Never	1.6	2	1.5	11
Not applicable	14	13	16	22

"My partner(s) asks me before engaging in sexual activity."	All (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	TGQN (%)
Always	37	38	35	11
Most of the time	25	24	27	33
About half of the time	7	7	6.35	22
Sometimes	12	12	11	11
Never	4.7	5	6.35	22
Not applicable	15	15	14	22

How often do you think about consent?	All (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	TGQN (%)
Always	35	35	33.33	33.33
Most of the time	39	38.4	36	44.44
Sometimes	21	22	17.4	11.11
Never	5	4.5	6.3	0

Responses by Classification

"Sexual assault is a problem at The University of Texas at Austin."	Freshman (%)	Sophomore (%)	Junior (%)	Senior (%)	Graduate (%)	Staff/Faculty (%)

Strongly agree	10.3	23.8	40	36.25	15	11
Agree	37.9	35.8	34.6	35	30.3	44
Somewhat agree	34.4	30.9	11.5	12.5	30.3	33
Neither agree nor disagree	13.8	7	7.7	6.25	13	11
Somewhat disagree	3.4	2.3	0	3.75	3	0
Disagree	0	0	5.7	5	3	0
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	3	0

"The University of Texas at Austin takes sexual assault seriously"	Freshman (%)	Sophomore (%)	Junior (%)	Senior (%)	Graduate (%)	Staff/Faculty (%)
Strongly agree	10	2	3.8	3.8	9	11
Agree	38	21	17.3	14	18	67
Somewhat agree	21	33	38.4	21	21	22
Neither agree nor disagree	3	9.5	5.7	10	12	0
Somewhat disagree	17	24	13	23	24	0
Disagree	7	9.5	19	16	12	0
Strongly disagree	3	0	1.9	11	3	0

"I am aware of what campus resources and/or reporting options are available should I need them."	Freshman (%)	Sophomore (%)	Junior (%)	Senior (%)	Graduate (%)	Staff/Faculty (%)
Strongly agree	6.9	11.9	13.46	18.75	29.4	67
Agree	27.5	31	40.4	32.5	23.5	22
Somewhat agree	44.8	28.5	21.1	23.75	35.3	11
Neither agree nor disagree	6.9	9.5	1.9	3.75	0	0
Somewhat disagree	6.9	11.9	13.46	8.75	5.9	0
Disagree	6.9	7.14	5.7	8.75	5.9	0
Strongly disagree	0	0	38.4	2.5	0	0

Consent Knowledge & Awareness

"I know what consent is."	Freshman (%)	Sophomore (%)	Junior (%)	Senior (%)	Graduate (%)	Staff/Faculty (%)
Strongly agree	82.8	76.2	80.7	78.75	67.6	89
Agree	17.2	23.8	15.38	18.75	29.4	11
Somewhat agree	0	0	1.92	0	2.94	0
Neither agree nor disagree	0	0	1.92	0	0	0
Somewhat disagree	0	0	0	1.25	0	0
Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0

"Most students know what consent is."	Freshman (%)	Sophomore (%)	Junior (%)	Senior (%)	Graduate (%)	Staff/Faculty (%)
Strongly agree	27.6	7.1	5.7	3.75	2.9	0
Agree	37.9	26.2	23	36.25	23.5	33
Somewhat agree	24	40.5	42.3	31.25	38.2	55.5
Neither agree nor disagree	3.4	4.7	3.8	7.5	11.76	11.11
Somewhat disagree	6.9	11.9	11.5	13.75	11.76	0
Disagree	0	9.5	5.7	3.75	11.76	0
Strongly disagree	0	0	7.7	2.5	0	0

"I know what my sexual boundaries are and I am able to express them."	Freshman (%)	Sophomore (%)	Junior (%)	Senior (%)	Graduate (%)	Staff/Faculty (%)
Strongly agree	27.6	30.9	46.1	35	32.4	67
Agree	48.3	42.8	25	36.25	41.1	33
Somewhat agree	13.8	14.3	19.23	17.5	14.7	0
Neither agree nor disagree	6.9	4.8	3.84	1.25	5.9	0
Somewhat disagree	0	4.8	1.9	7.5	2.9	0
Disagree	3.44	2.4	1.9	1.25	2.9	0
Strongly disagree	0	0	1.9	0	0	0

"I know how to ask potential sexual partners for consent."	Freshman (%)	Sophomore (%)	Junior (%)	Senior (%)	Graduate (%)	Staff/Faculty (%)
Strongly agree	41.3	52.4	50	52.5	41.2	67
Agree	55.2	30.9	28.8	36.25	41.2	33
Somewhat agree	0	9.5	15.38	8.75	14.7	0
Neither agree nor disagree	3.44	2.4	1.92	1.25	5.9	0
Somewhat disagree	0	4.8	5.77	0	0	0
Disagree	0	0	1.92	1.25	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0

Consent Behaviors

“I ask my partner(s) for consent before engaging in sexual activity”	Freshman (%)	Sophomore (%)	Junior (%)	Senior (%)	Graduate (%)	Staff/Faculty (%)
Always	58.6	66.66	51.9	58.75	38.2	89
Most of the time	20.7	14.28	25	25	26.4	11
About half of the time	3.44	0	1.92	2.5	5.9	0
Sometimes	0	4.76	5.77	0	5.9	0
Never	0	0	0	2.5	5.9	0
Not applicable	17.2	14.28	15.38	11.25	17.6	0

"My partner(s) asks me before engaging in sexual activity."	Freshman (%)	Sophomore (%)	Junior (%)	Senior (%)	Graduate (%)	Staff/Faculty (%)
Always	44.8	45.2	36.5	35	21.2	67
Most of the time	24.13	19	25	27.5	33.3	22
About half of the time	6.7	11.9	5.8	7.5	3	0
Sometimes	3.44	7.4	15.4	12.5	24.24	11
Never	0	2.3	7.7	6.25	9	0
Not applicable	0	19	15.4	13.75	15.1	0

How often do you think about consent?	Freshman (%)	Sophomore (%)	Junior (%)	Senior (%)	Graduate (%)	Staff/Faculty (%)
Always	34.5	38	40.38	36.25	26.4	11
Often	44.8	35.7	38.46	38.75	32.3	66
Sometimes	17.2	21.4	17.3	18.75	35.2	22
Never	3.44	4.8	3.8	6.25	5.8	0

Appendix B. Students' Consent Definitions

To me, consent is defined as...	Ranking
A sober, pre-negotiated enthusiastic "yes" to every activity with the ability to revoke consent for ANY reason at ANY time. This should be received with acceptance, comforting, and an immediate complete stop of any activity. (AKA KNOW YOUR SAFEWORD, NEGOTIATE EVERYTHING AND CHECK IN WITH YOUR PARTNER THROUGHOUT)	5
A sober, enthusiastic yes that is not coerced or forced	4
A clear and resounding yes that is continued throughout the sexual experience	4
positive, enthusiastic, ongoing, voluntary	4
Definite, repeated yes given with a clear and present mind	4
conscious verbal and physical affirmation from someone of able mind and body	4
A sober, emphatic YES, able to be rescinded at anytime	4
a clear, enthusiastic yes when sound in mind	4
Consciously, willingly, and enthusiastically agreeing to certain acts.	4
Enthusiastic, ongoing, sober, verbal “yes”	4
A strong yes produced without coercion or pressure, and while the person is coherent enough to know what they’re saying	4
Your partner/s providing consistent and clear "yes"-es throughout the course of any/all sexual activity.	4
Conscious, willing, thoughtful permission	4
Conscious acknowledgment between two or more people that they are willing, able, and want to perform a specific sexual act	4
clearly saying yes in a coherent state of mind	4
A CLEAR expression/acknowledgement that both partners fully want to engage in a sexual activity. At any time of the engagement, a partner can take that consent away.	4
Explicit yes or no from partner before engaging in anything —without being drunk.	4
definitive and unambiguous agreement to participate in a sexual act. Giving consent once does not mean you're giving consent for future repetitions of that act, and consent can always be withdrawn.	4
An ongoing, enthusiastic, and informed yes.	4
A clear, undeniable, enthusiastic, and revocable yes	3
All parties being enthusiastic and open about what they want and don’t want, and respecting this boundaries	3
an enthusiastic and not forced yes or approval before inacting in any physical contact	3
a verbal "Yes, this is ok" between sexual partners before and during sexual activity	3
An enthusiastic yes without the influence of drugs or alcohol	3
a clear, enthusiastic YES	3
A verbal yes and can be changed at any time.	3

An enthusiastic agreement to an individual act	3
A continual conversation about comfort	3
For new partners, verbal agreement for long term partners, body language and reciprocity if not outright asking for both, checking in periodically to make sure everything is good	3
A verbal, prolonged yes without a doubt. If I change my mind then consent is no longer valid	3
an enthusiastic agreement to participate in a sexual activity each and every time partners participate, given by all involved.	3
Continued and enthusiastic yes	3
Clear, verbal agreement from both parties to engage in sexual activity	3
uncoerced, enthusiastic yes	3
a clear, sober, and enthusiastic yes	3
a willing and enthusiastic "yes"	3
the verbal agreement to proceed, with the understanding that consent can be revoked at any time.	3
An oral, unobstructed and unforced (by pressure, alcohol, drugs, etc) and direct expression of boundaries between any involved individuals before engaging in any type sexual activity.	3
Always making sure that your partner (s) agree with what you're doing/plan to do and making sure to stop completely whenever they feel uncomfortable. It's about respecting them and their boundaries	3
explicitly establishing that both people or all people are comfortable and willing to particiate	3
an enthusiastic and freely given yes	3
enthusiastic, continuous 'yes'	3
Enthusiastic and informed agreement by a person who is legally responsible.	3
Verbal and clear communication with a sober person	3
clear, enthusiastic, and sober agreement to participate	3
A strong yes. Consent is broken AS SOON as someone says "No".	3
An enthusiastic, verbal and sober yes	3
enthusiastic, explicit "yes"	3
Unforced, enthusiastic, verbal "yes"	3
A clear and enthusiastic yes	3
Agreement to engage in an activity without external pressures	3
Enthusiastic willingness to participate	3
An enthusiastic, clear-minded yes from all parties	3
A definitive agreement between two people on the next action.	3
Literal verbal confirmation that all participating parties must give. It can be taken away at any time, and all involved parties should understand and respect the idea of consent	3
A unambiguous allowance of typically sexual advances but also for any element of two persons interacting physically	3

saying yes/ agreeing to a certain activity, without force coercion etc	3
Ongoing affirmation	3
verbal and clear "yes"	3
A clear and excited yes	3
a mutual enthusiastic and ongoing “yes”	3
Clear, affermative yes	3
explicit verbal agreement to individual acts.	3
enthusiastic and clear affirmation to proceed.	3
Clear, freely given agreement to engage	3
an agreement between two sober beings	3
A for sure verbal yes that can be revoked at anytime.	3
a continuous conversation.	3
the willing participation in whatever it is you are doing - NOT the absence of no	3
an enthusiast mutual conscious and verbal agreement between two or more people	3
An enthusiastic and conscious agreement	3
Enthusiastic yes that can be revoked at any time	3
Clear yes to do sexual activities	3
yes means yes and can change at any point, no or nothing always means no	3
an enthusiastic yes and anything else is not consent.	3
A firm, clear, enthusiastic well-informed yes	3
Some kind of clear, verbal agreement that someone wants to engage in sexual activity	3
An excited and undeniable yes without influence of any drugs or alcohol	3
a consistent and enthusiastic yes that can be revoked at any time :)	3
enthusiastic yes/response to sexual activity that is consistently asked for throughout the experience	3
Someone giving either verbal or nonverbal permission to engage in sexual activity. Nonverbal is tricky, it usually starts when the other person initiates sex. However consent can go away at any point	3
the verbal or active expression of enthusiastic participation	3
an enthusiastic and emphatic yes for a single sexual act, does not guarantee future agreements to that act or any other act	3
someone in the right state of mind readily and genuinely wanting to participate	3
enthusiastic and uninhibited (intoxication) permission	3
Mutual agreement	3
The uncoerced, self-determined, communicated choice to participate in an interaction	3
A yes, freely given that can be revoked at any time.	3
Consistently verbally and physically showing enthusiasm	3

Both parties being willing and excited about it.	3
a verbal enthusiastic intentional yes	3
The agreement between two or more people to engage in an activity that everyone understands.	3
A mutual, not necessarily verbal, understanding that all parties participating are okay with what's going on and any accompanying results from it.	3
Asking whether somebody wants to have a sexual interaction and to the same extent that you want.	2
The approval of a mutually understood and safe sexual experience	2
An enthusiastic yes to engage in any activity	2
A shared enthusiasm where all parties feel completely comfortable with all actions and the feeling of empowerment and safety that if you say you want something to stop that it will stop immediately.	2
enthusiastic permission and willing engagement	2
Healthy boundary-setting between two people. Can be sexual, romantic, or platonic.	2
Expressing the desire and giving permission for something to occur	2
Agreeing to do something verbally or nonverbally	2
an enthusiastic yes from both/all parties	2
an enthusiastic "yes"	2
The direct expression of agreement on performing an act	2
enthusiastic yes	2
permission to perform sexual acts	2
Yes	2
A mutual consensus about what is acceptable and what is not	2
asking someone for their permission to engage in a certain activity	2
temporary permission to perform a sexual act until that permission is regranted or rescinded.	2
An enthusiastic yes!	2
Verbal permission to engage in a wanted activity	2
both parties strongly expressed willingness to do certain sexual moves	2
checking if my partner is interested in hooking up at the time	2
an enthusiastic yes	2
Getting explicit permission from your partner	2
An enthusiastic yes to a specific activity	2
Direct verbal confirmation. “Do you want to ____” “Will you do _____” etc	2
Enthusiastically saying yes I want to move forward in this sexual activity	2
Agreement to have sex	2
A mutual agreement among all parties for permission to perform an activity with someone(s).	2
the willingness of both people engaged in an activity	2

Agreement between two people	2
enthusiastically agreeing to something	2
enthusiastic yes	2
An enthusiastic yes, or a yes with serious signals	2
the act of communicating to your partner that you are comfortable in engaging in sexual activity.	2
An enthusiastic yes	2
Verbal agreement to have sex, or another strong and obvious indication of the desire for sex	2
An enthusiastic yes	2
An enthusiastic yes	2
Giving someone approval to touch you in a way that you want	2
Both parties agreeing to engage in an act	2
enthusiastic consent	2
Explicit permission to engage in a particular sexual act	2
Verbal or no verbal communication of willingness to participate in a sexual activity.	2
An enthusiastic yes	2
Getting verbal permission as well has understanding the situation	2
Enthusiastic yes	2
Permission	2
verbal permission or rejection of sexual activity	2
Making sure both parties are comfortable with what’s happening	2
Enthusiastic participation	2
A definite yes from another person	2
Knowing what the sexual boundaries are.	2
Agreeing to partake in specific sexual activity	2
Yes	2
An enthusiastic yes	2
an enthusiastic yes	2
An enthusiastic yes, undeniable	2
Willingness to do sth	2
an enthusiastic yes from all parties after knowing all the conditions of the encounter	2
an excited yes	2
Permission to engage in sexual activity	2
Saying yes	2
Yes.	2
two willing parties	2

The partner clearly showing or saying they are more than okay with my actions	2
enthusiastic yes verbal or nonverbal in the case of partners who have been together for a while and understand the other person's cues	2
Consent is defined as a clear and definitive yes response to an activity.	2
A enthusiastic yes	2
asking permission and pulling back if sending nonverbal discomfort	2
Communicating with a partner and agreeing to intimate acts.	2
An enthusiastic yes to participate in any sexual activity	2
enthusiastic agreement to participate	2
agreeing on both sides	2
a mutual, enthusiastic yes	2
A genuine, enthusiastic yes!	2
being in a relationship in which boundaries are clear and every party asks for mutual agreement	2
An enthusiastic “yes”	2
Yes.	2
obtaining explicit permission to engage in any kind of sexual activity with a person, from touching genitalia/breasts/etc to intercourse	2
complete trust and communication with your partner	1
Being fully comfortable to say “yes”	1
When the mood is right, and you're not conditioned by pornography to ignore readable human responses	1
being on board for sexual activity	1
Eagerness to continue or get closer. It can be a physical response or verbal.	1
Being comfortable and choosing to proceed to be intimate with a partner you have selected for yourself	1
acceptance and desire to engage	1
The right to do something with someone that may affect them emotionally physically or sexually.	1
Wanting to engage in a sexual encounter with someone else	1
trust	1
All parties feeling comfortable and happy	1
an enthusiastic yes when no is not an option	1

Average Score: 2.5355

Rankings

The rankings were based (1-5) were based on how many pieces of the four elements of the consent definition were provided:

- Voluntary (not coerced, not forced, no power imbalance, willing, etc.)
- Agreement ("enthusiastic yes," mutual, assent, conversation, communication, etc.)
- Clarity (clear, conscious, sober, understanding, etc.)
- Ongoing (continuous, revocable, checking-in, etc.)

5's touched on all parts of the definition, 4's discussed three elements, 3's discussed two, 2's only touched on one component, and 1's did not touch on any elements or were incorrect.

Appendix C. Thematic Analysis of Open-Ended Responses

Any other thoughts, comments, concerns you would like to share?	**Theme(s)**
I feel like consent is an issue on college campuses because there's rarely conversation on how to navigate nuanced situations where one/both partners may be drunk (but still in control of faculties).	Alcohol
There's definitely a problem with frat guys thinking they can use drunk girls. Me and several friends have ended up in situations where we wake up next to guy and we definitely did not consent to be there	Alcohol; Disclosure of an Assault; Fraternities
I think when people are younger in college and feel more uncertain and lack confidence with their sexuality, consent isn't asked for as much (not intentionally, but people can feel that it's awkward)	Awkwardness
Consent is sort of awkward or uncomfortable to ask for... its the correct thing to do, but its hard. And if u r in a committed relationship its nice not to have to ask over and over again all the time. Theres also the possibility of rejection and i think we should learn ways to cope with our need for affection when someone says no.	Awkwardness
I really hope more people at UT take sexual assault/harassment seriously and truly get educated about consent.	Hopes
There should be better ways to make sure consent is actually being given	Need for Education
this topic should be part of a mandatory orientation for undergrads and grads	Need for Education
Sometimes boundaries are not respected and I don't always know how to deal with those situations	Need for Education (Boundaries)
There needs to be a discussion about consenting to sex without protection. If one partner does not want to use protection but the other one does, there needs to be a conversation between the two partners. If your partner says they want to use a condom, it is not okay to say no and start having sex without talking about it.	Need for Education (Consent Involving Protection, Sex)
I think emphasizing the importance of 'checking in' on your partner throughout sexual activity, to make sure they're enjoying rather than just having an okay time, should be a bigger part of consent.	Need for Education (Continuous, Pleasure)
I think it is very important to still educate people about the fact that even if somebody wants to have sexual interaction they do not need to be willing to go as far as you wanna go. And if they say stop then you should stop.	Need for Education (Revocability)
I think many girls don't realize that you can take consent away if you are no longer wanting to engage in something. You do not have to continue doing something just because at first you thought that's what you wanted. I also think boys tend to only think about that "first" asking for consent and not making sure the partner feels comfortable throughout.	Need for Education (Revocability)
UT sucks at confronting sexual assault	Negative Perception of UT

I wish there was more outreach on behalf of the university (as opposed to only clubs and organizations on campus speaking out)	Negative Perception of UT
Title IX treats student survivors with no respect and borderline harrasses students who have a case brought to title IX on their behalf.	Negative Perception of UT
Just because the university takes sexual assault seriously does not mean their actions have matched their commitment.	Negative Perception of UT
I've been sexually assaulted and the way UT handles sexual assault has made me feel personally unsafe on campus	Negative Perception of UT
The University's lack of response to the several cases of sexual misconduct involving professors harassing students is particularly concerning to me	Negative Perception of UT
As someone who has gone through the reporting process at UT, it took so long and was so painful that I wish I never had to report it. The guy was never even held responsible by the university. It wasn't worth how difficult it was.	Negative Perception of UT (Title IX); Disclosure of an Assault)
I was sexually assaulted and UT is useless at this. They had to tell my abuser that I reported him like... can you not?	Negative Perception of UT (Title IX); Disclosure of an Assault)
There is only one employee for all 50000 students here that we can go to report sexual assault where they are NOT required to report it. This resource needs to Be improved and we need more people we can go to that are not required to report the incident.	Negative Perception of UT; Suggestion for Improvement
We need more confidential advocates	Negative Perception of UT; Suggestion for Improvement
You're an angel, Mia!! I wanna be you when I grow up. Thanks for all that you do!!	Nice Note to the Researcher
I've never had a sexual partner	Personal Fact
Consent gets muddled when there are power dynamics so even if someone says they agree, if there's a perceived power differential, it may not be full consent because the person doesn't feel like they have any choice in the matter.	Power dynamics
If you're in a relationship with someone and you've had sex with them many times, I don't think verbal consent is necessary. Like when y'all have done it plenty of times it's pretty obvious when your partner wants sex	Relationship
I feel at the beginning of my relationship with my partner we did ask each other for consent, and now it is not nexessary to do so because we know each other and we know what we;re comfortable with	Relationship
I am married, so I rarely ask my partner for consent, but after being together for so long, I can read his body language well enough to know if it's a yes or no.	Relationship (body language)

On the asking for consent question - if it were a new sexual partner I would ask for consent, but with my long term boyfriend it doesn't seem like I need to every time because I can tell if whatever I am doing is okay based on body language/mood etc	Relationship (body language)
Resources for those who have previously experienced sexual assault and never talked about it?	Request for Resources
I feel like the resources for reporting harrasment and sexual assault aren't that obviously displayed around campus	Suggestion for Improvement
Some of the Title IX worth things need to be made clearer.	Suggestion for Improvement
I think that sexual assault is a huge issue in America today and not explicitly just at UT Austin. It is definitely still a problem here and we should do what we can to improve the physical and psychological safety of our campus for everyone.	Suggestion for Improvement; Perception of Sexual Assault
The gender question is a bit weird :/ are male and female genders or sexes? Also would love to get more involved with consent around campus...	Survey Feedback
Sexual assault itself can be defined in different - if similar - ways. In addition, a trigger warning would be appropriate when asking people to respond to surveys about sexual assault.	Survey Feedback
I think of it with touching, but maybe it's other kinds of interaction as well.	Thoughts
"Ask for consent" is a strange directive. I get the gist and obviously do not disagree with the idea, but the way it's communicated is as though to toddlers. If that is necessary because men are so poisoned by pornography that they view sex completelt as something you do to the other person. If so, that is a sad reflection of our culture, but I get it. Men are trash.	Thoughts
Some guys may still hold the old thoughts that when girls say no they actually means yes, from some previous experience or TV. Once you tell them "no means no", they will stop. So it is critical for girls to understand themselves and ask the partner to stop seriously.	Thoughts

Biography

Mia Goldstein was born in Dallas, Texas on May 14, 1997 to journalist parents. The family moved to South Orange, New Jersey in 2007, where she spent her teen years eating bagels and screenwriting. Eager to get back to her Texan roots, her first adult decision was enrolling in the Plan II Honors program at the University of Texas at Austin. A survivor herself, Mia found her place at UT through the realms of interpersonal violence prevention and advocacy. The granddaughter of Holocaust survivors and Jewish refugees, she is deeply passionate about social justice and antiracist work.

During her time on the Forty Acres, she founded the Interpersonal Violence Peer Support (IVPS) program, served as President of the Voices Against Violence student organization, and was an active member of the Friar Society, Pearl Street Cooperative, Students for Equity and Diversity, and the 37th Street Royal Lights Society. When she's not stressing out about her thesis, Mia enjoys spinning fire, playing guitar, camping, comedy writing, backpacking, long road-trips, and spending quality time with friends and family. She plans on attending law school in the near future with the aim of pursuing a career in human rights law and public policy.